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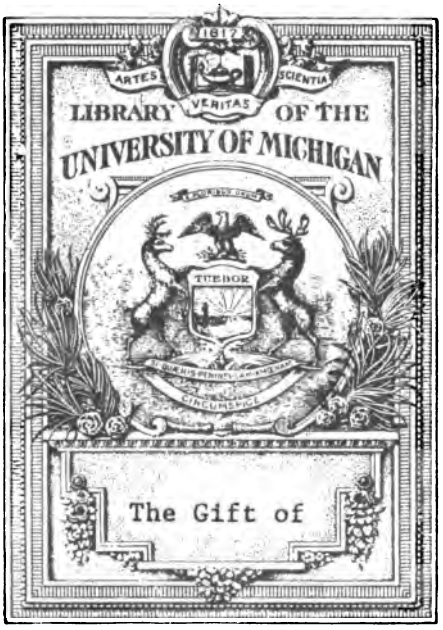
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Karl R. Frankena
and
Mark W. Frankena

Religious Perfection:

OR, A

THIRD PART

OF THE

ENQUIRY

AFTER

HAPPINESS.

BY

RICHARD LUCAS, *D. D.*
Late Prebendary of *Weſtminſter.*

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on to perfection, Heb. vi. 1.

The FIFTH EDITION.

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TO

Whitelocke Bulſtrode,

OF THE

INNER TEMPLE, Eſquire.

I Here preſent you, my dear Friend, with a diſcourſe, wherein I labour to advance the great and true ends of life, the glory of God, and the perfection and happineſs of man. I cannot, I confeſs, pretend to have come up to the dignity of my ſubject; yet I have done what I could, and have attempted it with my utmoſt force. I know you too well to imagine you fond of an ad-

dreſs of this publick nature: you love the real and ſolid ſatisfactions, not the pomp and ſhew, thoſe ſplendid incumbrances of life: your rational and virtuous pleaſures burn like a gentle and chearful flame, without noiſe or blaze. However, I cannot but be confident, that you'll pardon the liberty which I here take, when I have told you, that the making the beſt acknowldgement I could to one, who has given me ſo many proofs of a generous and paſſionate friendſhip, was a pleaſure too great to be reſiſted. I am,

Dear Sir,

Unfeignedly Yours,

R. LUCAS.

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THE

THE INTRODUCTION.

BY what ſteps I am advanced thus far *in my Enquiry after Happineſs*, and what connexion or coherence there is, between *this* and two *other* diſcourſes already publiſhed on that ſubject, is very obvious. In the *firſt*, I endeavour to remove thoſe objections which repreſent all enquiries and attempts after true happineſs in this life, either as fantaſtick or unneceſſary; or, which is as bad, vain and to no purpoſe: and, after I have aſſerted the *value* and *poſſibility* of happineſs, I do in general point out the true reaſons of our ill ſucceſs and diſappointment in purſuit of it. In the *ſecond*, I ſtate the true notion of *human life*, inſiſt upon the ſeveral kinds of it, and ſhew what qualifications and virtues the *active* and *contemplative* life demand; and then conſider how life may be prolonged and improved, in this *third*, I proſecute the ſame deſign, which I had in the two former; the promoting human happineſs. For *life*, *perfection*, and *happineſs* have a cloſe and inſepa-

rable

rable dependance on one another. For as *life*, which is the rational exercise and employment of our powers and faculties, does naturally advance on, and terminate in *Perfection*; so *Perfection*, which is nothing else but the maturity of human virtues, does naturally end in that rest and peace, that tranquillity, serenity, and joy of mind, which we call *Happiness*. Now *Perfection*, in an abstracted and metaphysical notion of it, is a state that admits neither of accession nor diminution. But talking of it practically, and in a manner accommodated to the nature of things, the *Perfection* of man consists in such endowments and attainments as man is generally capable of in this life. And because man may be considered either in relation to *this*, or to *another* world, therefore *human Perfection* may, I think, naturally enough be divided into *religious* and *secular*. By *secular*, I mean that which regards our interest in this life: by *religious*, that which secures it in eternity. The one more directly and immediately aims at the favour of man; the other at the favour of God: the one pursues that happiness, whatever it be, that is to be found in outward and worldly advantages: the other, that which flows from virtue and a good conscience. 'Tis easy now to discern, which of these two kinds of *Perfection* is the more desirable; the one purifies

purifies and exalts our nature, the other poliſhes and varniſhes it; the one makes a compleat gentleman, the other a true Chriſtian; the ſucceſs of the one is precarious, that of the other certain, having no dependance on time or chance, the humour or fancy of man; the pleaſure of the one, is ſhort and ſuperficial; that of the other, great and laſting; the *world* admires the one, and *God* approves the other. To be throughly perſuaded of *this*, is a good ſtep towards true wiſdom, as being that, which will enable man to ſteer the whole courſe of life aright. But while I prefer the one, I do not preſcribe the neglect or contempt of the other; ſo far am I from it, that I am of opinion, that ſecular *Perfection* has very often ſome influence upon our ſpiritual ſtate, as well as its uſe and advantage in reference to our temporal one: that the moſt admired accompliſhments of a ſecular life, are ſo far from being inconſiſtent with religion, that they naturally ſpring from it, and thrive and flouriſh moſt when they are influenced and cultivated by it; and judging that it might be of ſome ſervice to the world to inform and convince them of *this*, I had it ſometimes in my thoughts to have treated here as well of ſecular as religious Perfection: but doubting how well this might ſuit with my function, and how far the beſt obſervations I could make on this

ſubject

ſubject might fall ſhort of anſwering t
expectation of men of worldly parts a
experience, I laid aſide the deſign. He
then, I confine my meditations wholly
Religious Perfection; I examine the natu
of it, both in general, and in particula
not only ſtating the true notion of it, b
alſo deſcending to the ſeveral branches ar
parts of it; I free it from thoſe miſtak
and diſputes that perplex and incumber i
I lay down the motives to it, and preſcri
the ways of obtaining it.

After this ſhort account of my deſign
the next thing I am to do, is to prevent,
I can, thoſe prejudices which may eith
wholly fruſtrate, or at leaſt very much hin
der and diminiſh the ſucceſs and influence
it. Some are apt to ſtartle at the ver
mention of Perfection; they have enter
tained ſuch humble thoughts, not only
human nature, but, as it ſeems, of divin
grace too and evangelical righteouſneſs
that all talk of Perfection ſeems to then
like the preaching a new goſpel, and an ob
truding upon the world a fantaſtick ſchem
of proud and pretending morality. Bu
this fear will ſoon vaniſh, when I tel
ſuch; that I diſcourſe of the *Perfection* o
men, not *angels*: and, that I treat *this*, no
like a *monk*, or a ſublime and ſubtle *ſchoo*
man, but like one, who have been dail
converſant with the doubts and ſcruples
witl

with the fears and frailties of human nature, and departing ſouls. I do not pretend to bleſs the world with the diſcovery of *new* truths. If at any time I place *old* ones in a better light; if I wipe off the duſt, which diſpute and time, and the corruption of manners, has here and there ſcattered upon them, 'tis the utmoſt I aim at.

But how numerous, will ſome ſay, are the controverſies that have in every age perplexed this ſubject? *Grace* and *nature*, *perfection* and *ſin*, *merit*, *ſupererogation*, &c. theſe are themes that have exerciſed and embroiled the Church of Chriſt, almoſt through all the ſeveral ages of it down to this day: and with how little advantage to the honour of Chriſtianity, and the intereſt of virtue, have the brighteſt parts, and the deepeſt learning been here employed? To *this*, all I have to ſay, is, I write practically, and conſult the intereſt of ſouls, not *parties*. I cannot but ſee, and that with trouble and regret, how much Chriſtianity has in almoſt all times ſuffered by thoſe nice and ſubtle, by thoſe obſtinate and paſſionate diſputes, with which writers have even oppreſſed and ſtifled the moſt *practical* ſubjects; and do moſt earneſtly deſire to ſee the ſpirit of *Polemical* divinity caſt out of the Church of Chriſt, and *that* of a *practical* and *experimental one* eſtabliſhed in the room of it. Tho' therefore, I have conſidered thoſe

thoſe controverſies which concern my ſu
ject, it was with no other deſign, than
guard and fortify my reader againſt the
influence of ſeveral errors, with which the
abound. I decline all uſeleſs ſpeculation
and labour wholly to reſtore religion to i
native ſtrength and beauty; ſo that I thin
this objection will not touch me, who d
not propoſe to write a *learned*, but a *uſefi*
book.

If any man be apprehenſive, that 'tis im
poſſible to aſſert the doctrine of *Perfection*
without looking a little too favourably to
wards *Pelagianiſm* or *Enthuſiaſm*, or ſome
thing of this kind; I do here aſſure ſuch a
one, that I advance no *Perfection* that raiſe
men above the uſe or need of *means*, or in
vites them to neglect the *word*, *prayer*, o
Sacraments, or is raiſed on any other foun
dation than the *goſpel* of *Chriſt*. I revive
not *Pelagianiſm*, nor claſh with St *Auſtin*;
I need not thoſe conceſſions which he makes
Cæleſtius in the cloſe of his book *de Per-
fectione Juſtitiæ*. I am perſuaded that the
ſtrength of *nature* is too ſlight a foundation
to build *Perfection* on: I contend for *free-
dom* from no other ſin than *actual*, *volunta-
ry*, and *deliberate*: and let concupiſcence,
or any unavoidable diſtemper, or diſorder
of our nature, be what it will, all that I
aim at here is, the *reducing*, not *extirpating*
it. And finally, how earneſtly ſoever I
exhort

exhort to *Perfection*, I can very well content my ſelf with St. *Auſtin*'s *notion of it*, namely, that it is nothing elſe, but *a daily progreſs towards that pure and unſpotted holineſs, which we ſhall attain to in another life.*

Thus, I think, I have ſufficiently guarded this following diſcourſe againſt the miſapprehenſions and jealouſies of all, who have any ſerious concern for religion, how much ſoever they may be ſwayed by ſome particular opinions. But after all, I do not expect that it ſhould meet with a very obliging reception from a great part of the world. Many there are, who will ever openly rally and ridicule all attempts of this kind: and there are others, who will ſecretly ſlight and inwardly deſpiſe them, as the vain and fond projects of well-meaning indeed, but very weak and unexperienced mortals. But this moves me little; theſe men are generally too much ſtrangers to *ſincerity*, to be competent judges of *Perfection:* nor do I wonder, if the corrupt and vicious part of mankind be infected with as much malice and envy againſt extraordinary goodneſs, as ſome are againſt power and greatneſs. The conſciouſneſs of much baſeneſs and corruption in one's ſelf, is apt to make one ſtrive to bring down all men to the ſame level, and to believe that there is nothing of *Perfection* in the world, but only a groundleſs or hypocritical pretenſion to it.

it. This is an opinion that ill men gree ly embrace, becauſe it gives them ſo kind of peace, ſecurity, and confidenc whereas the contrary opinion, as it wo be apt to make them aſhamed of their *p ſent* ſtate, ſo would it make them fear and apprehenſive of their *future* one. write not therefore to ſuch as theſe, n can be much concerned what cenſure th paſs on a deſign, againſt which they ha an inveterate and obſtinate averſion.

The method I obſerve in this treatiſe i in the *firſt ſection*, I conſider *Perfection* mo generally: in the *ſecond*, the ſeveral pa of it; and in the *laſt*, the *obſtacles* and *imp diments* of our attaining it. In the two fi ſections, I always firſt fix and explain t *notion* of that ſtate of virtue which I di courſe of. Next I proceed to the *fruits advantages* of it; and in the laſt place pr ſcribe the *method* by which it may be a tained.

SEC

SECT. I.

Of Religious Perfection *in general.*

CHAP. I.

Perfection *a confirmed habit of holineſs. This notion conformable to reaſon and ſcripture. The nature of an habit conſidered, according to four properties of it.*

MOST diſputes and controverſies ariſe from falſe and miſtaken notions of the matter under debate; and *ſo* I could ſhew it has happened here. Therefore, to prevent miſtakes, and cut off all occaſions of *contention* (which ſerves only to defeat the influence and ſucceſs of practical diſcourſes) I think it neceſſary to begin here with a plain account *what* it is I mean by *Religious Perfection.*

Religion is nothing elſe, but the purifying and refining nature by grace, the raiſing and exalting our faculties and capacities by wiſdom and virtue. *Religious Perfec-*

tion, therefore, is nothing elſe but the me
ral accompliſhment of human nature, ſuc
a maturity of virtue as man in this li
is capable of; *Converſion* begins, *Perfectio*
conſummates the habit of righteouſneſs
in the one, religion is, as it were, in i
infancy; in the other, in its ſtrength an
manhood; ſo that *Perfection*, in ſhort,
nothing elſe, but a ripe and ſettled *hab*
of true holineſs. According to this not
on of religious *Perfection*, he is a *perfe*
man, whoſe *mind* is pure and vigorous, an
his *body* tame and obſequious; whoſ
faith is firm and ſteady, his *love* arden
and exalted, and his *hope* full of aſſu
rance; whoſe *religion* has in it that ardou
and conſtancy, and his *ſoul* that tranquil
lity and pleaſure, which beſpeaks him
child of the *light*, and of the *day*, *a par
taker of the Divine Nature, and raiſe
above the corruption which is in the wor
through luſt.*

This account of religious *Perfection*
ſo natural and eaſy, that I fancy no ma
will demand a *proof* of it; nor ſhould I g
about one, were it not to ſerve ſome *fu
ther* ends than the mere confirmation of i
It has manifeſtly the countenance both
reaſon and *ſcripture*; and how contradict
ry ſoever ſome ancient and latter ſchem
of *Perfection* ſeem to be, or really are,
one another; yet do they all agree in effe

in what I have laid down. If we appeal to *Reaſon*, no man can doubt, but that an *habit* of virtue has much more of excellence and merit in it, than ſingle accidental *acts*, or uncertain fits and paſſions; ſince an *habit* is not only the ſource and ſpring of the nobleſt actions and the moſt elevated paſſions, but it renders us more regular and ſteady, more uniform and conſtant in every thing that is good. As to good natural *diſpoſitions*, they have little of ſtrength, little of perfection in them, till they be raiſed and improved into *habits*: and for our *natural faculties*, they are nothing elſe, but the *capacities* of good or evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fixed and influenced by *moral* principles. It remains then, that religious *Perfection* muſt conſiſt in an *habit* of righteouſneſs. And to prevent all impertinent ſcruples and cavils, I add a *confirmed* and well eſtabliſhed one.

That this is the ſcripture notion of *Perfection*, is manifeſt; *Firſt*, From the uſe of this word in ſcripture. *Secondly*, From the characters and deſcriptions of the beſt and higheſt ſtate which any ever actually attained, or to which we are invited and exhorted.

1. From the uſe of the word: wherever we find any mention of *Perfection* in *ſcripture*, if we examine the place well,

we ſhall find nothing more intended, t
uprightneſs and *integrity*, an unblame
and unreproveable life, a ſtate well
vanced in knowledge and virtue. T
upright and *perfect* are uſed as terms e
valent, *Job* i. *And that man was per*
and upright, fearing God and eſchewin
vil; and *Pſalm* xxxvii. 37. *Mark the per*
man and behold the upright man, for the
of that man is peace. Thus again, w
God exhorts *Abraham* to *Perfection*, (
xvii. 1 *I am the Almighty God*; *walk*
fore me and be thou perfect, all that he
horts him to, is a ſteady *obedience* to all
commandments, proceeding from a liv
fear of, and faith in him; and this is the
neral uſe of this word *Perfect* through
the *Old Teſtament*, namely to ſignify a
cere and juſt man, that feareth God,
eſcheweth evil, and is well fixed and e
bliſhed in his duty. In the *New Teſtam*
Perfection ſignifies the ſame thing whic
does in the *Old*; that is, univerſal rig
ouſneſs, and ſtrength, and growth in
Thus the *perfect* man, 2 *Tim.* iii. 17
one who is *throughly furniſhed to every*
work. Thus St. *Paul* tells us, *Col.* iv. 12. t
Epaphras laboured fervently in prayers
the Coloſſians, that they might ſtand per
and compleat in all the will of God. In *Ja*
i. 4. the *perfect* man is one, *who is ent*
lacking nothing, i. e. one who is advance
a *ma*

a *maturity* of virtue through patience and experience, and is fortified and eſtabliſhed in faith, love, and hope. In *this* ſenſe of the word *Perfect* St. *Peter* prays for thoſe to whom he writes his epiſtle, 1 *Pet.* v. 10. *But the God of all grace, who called us into his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus, after that ye have ſuffered a while, make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you.* When St. *Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to go on to *Perfection*, *Heb.* vi. he means nothing by it, but that ſtate of manhood which conſiſts in a well ſettled *habit* of wiſdom and goodneſs. This is plain, *firſt*, from *ver.* 11, 12. of this *chapter*, where he himſelf more fully explains his own meaning; *and we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope* unto the *end*; *that ye be not ſlothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promiſe.* *Next*, from the latter end of the 5th *chapter*; where we diſcern *what* gave occaſion to this exhortation; *there* diſtinguiſhing *Chriſtians* into two claſſes, *babes* and *ſtrong men*, i. e. *perfect* and *imperfect*, he deſcribes *both* at large thus: *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat; for every one that uſeth milk is unskilful in the word of righteouſneſs; for he*

is a babe; but ſtrong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even thoſe who by reaſon of uſe have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil. And tho' here the apoſtle ſeems more immediately to regard the *perfection* of *knowledge*; yet the *perfection* of *righteouſneſs* muſt never, in the language of the *ſcripture*, be ſeparated from it. Much the ſame remark muſt I add concerning the *integrity* of righteouſneſs, and the Chriſtians progreſs or advance in it. *Tho'* the *ſcripture*, when it ſpeaks of *Perfection*, doth ſometimes more directly refer to the one, and ſometimes to the other; *yet* we muſt ever ſuppoſe that they do mutually imply and include *one another*; ſince otherwiſe the notion of *Perfection* would be extremely maimed and incompleat. I will inſiſt therefore no longer on the uſe of the words *Perfect* and *Perfection* in *ſcripture:* but as a further proof that my notion of *Perfection* is truly *ſcriptural*, I will ſhew,

2. That the utmoſt *height*, to which the *ſcripture* exhorts us, is nothing more than a ſteady *habit* of holineſs; that the brighteſt *characters* it gives of the *perfect man*, the loveliеſt *deſcriptions* it makes us of the *perfecteſt ſtate*, are all made up of the *natural* and confeſſed *properties* of a ripe *habit*. There is no controverſy that I know of, about the *nature* of a *habit*, every man's

man's experience inſtructs him in the whole philoſophy of it; we are all agreed, that it is a kind of *ſecond nature*, that it makes us exert our ſelves with deſire and earneſtneſs, with ſatisfaction and pleaſure; that it renders us fixed in our choice, and conſtant in our actions, and almoſt as averſe to thoſe things which are repugnant to it, as we are to thoſe which are diſtaſteful and diſagreeable to our nature. And that, in a word, it ſo entirely and abſolutely poſſeſſes the man, that the power of it is not to be reſiſted, nor the empire of it to be ſhaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greateſt labour and difficulty imginable. All this is a confeſs'd and almoſt palpable truth in *habits of ſin*: and there is no reaſon why we ſhould not aſcribe the ſame force and efficacy to *habits of virtue*; eſpecially if we conſider that the ſtrength, eaſineſs, and pleaſure which belong *naturally* to *theſe habits*, receive no ſmall *acceſſion* from the *ſupernatural* energy and vigour of the *Holy Spirit*. I will therefore in a few words ſhew how that *ſtate of righteouſneſs* which the *ſcripture* invites us to, as our *Perfection*, directly anſwers this account I have given of an *habit*.

Is *habit* in *general* a ſecond *nature*? This ſtate of righteouſneſs is in ſcripture called *the new man*, Epheſ. iv. 24. *the new*

creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. *the Divine Nature*, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. Does it conſequently *rule* and *govern* man? Hear how St. *Paul* expreſſes this power of the *habit* of holineſs in himſelf, *Gal.* ii. 20. *I am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.* This is a conſtant effect of *habits*, and is equally diſcernible in thoſe of *vice* and *virtue*, that they *ſway* and *govern* the man they poſſeſs; *Rom.* vi. 16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto righteouſneſs?*

Shall I go on to a more diſtinct and particular conſideration of the properties of an habit? The *firſt* is, a great *averſion* for thoſe things which are *contrary* to it, or obſtruct us in the exerciſe of it. And this is directly the diſpoſition of the *perfect* man towards *temptations* and *ſins*; he is now aſhamed of thoſe things, which before he gloried in; he is filled with an holy indignation againſt thoſe things, which before he took pleaſure in; and what before he courted with fondneſs and paſſion, he now ſhuns with fear and vigilance. In brief, the *ſcripture* deſcribes ſuch an one as poſſeſſed with an utter hatred and abhorrence

rence of every evil way, and as an irreconcileable enemy to every thing that is an enemy to his virtue and his God. Thus Pſal. cxix. 163. *I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love*; and *verſe* 128. *Therefore I eſteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every falſe way.* And this is a genuine and natural effect of integrity or uprightneſs of heart; whence 'tis the obſervation of our *Saviour*, Matt. vi. 24. *No man can ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other.* And indeed every-where a hatred, a perfect hatred of evil, is accounted as a neceſſary conſequence of the love of God; *Pſal.* xxxvii. 10. *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil:* and therefore the *Pſalmiſt* reſolves to practiſe himſelf what he preſcribes to others; *Pſal.* ci. 2, 3. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart: I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me.* And how can this be otherwiſe? the love of God muſt neceſſarily imply an abhorrence of evil; and that *habit*, which confirms and increaſes the one, muſt confirm and increaſe the other too.

2. The *next* property of an *habit* is, that the *actions* which flow from it are

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(if we meet not with violent oppoſition) performed with *eaſe* and *pleaſure*: what is *natural*, is pleaſant and eaſy, and *habit* is a *ſecond nature*. When the love of virtue, and the hatred of vice, have once rooted themſelves in the ſoul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and ſhun the other? ſince this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we deteſt. This therefore is one conſtant character of *Perfection* in *ſcripture*: *delight* and *pleaſure* are every-where ſaid to accompany the practice of virtue, when it is once grown up to ſtrength and maturity: *The ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. *Perfect love caſteth out fear*, 1 Joh. iv. 18. And to him that loves, *the commandments of God are not grievous*, 1 Joh. v. 3. Hence it is, that *the good man's delight is in the law of the Lord*, and that *he meditates therein day and night*, Pſal. i. 2. Nor does he delight leſs in *action* than *meditation*, but grows in *grace* as much as *knowledge*; and abounds daily more and more in *good works*, as he increaſes in the *comfort* of the *Holy Ghoſt*. Conſonant to *this* property of *Perfection* it is, that in *Pſalm* xix, and cxix, and elſewhere frequently, we hear the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſing a kind of inconceivable joy and tranſport in

in the meditation and practice of the commands of God. So the first Christians, who spent their lives in devotion, faith, and charity, are said, *Acts* ii. 46. to have *eaten their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.* And 'tis a delightful description we have of the apostles, 2 *Cor.* vi. 10. *As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.*

3. *Vigour* and *activity*, or much *earnestness* and *application* of mind, is a *third* property of an *habit.* 'Tis impossible not to be intent upon those things for which we have even an *habitual* passion, if this *expression* may be allow'd me; an inclination, which has gathered strength and authority from custom, will exert itself with some warmth and briskness. Now certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to the *perfect* man in *scripture*, than *zeal* and *fervency* of spirit in the ways of God; and no wonder; for when actions flow at once from principles and custom; when they spring from love, and are attended by pleasure, and are incited and quickened by faith and hope too; how can it be, but that we should repeat them with some eagerness, and feel an holy impatience as often as we are hindered or disappointed? and as the nature of the thing shews, that thus it

ought

ought to be, ſo are there innumerable inſtances in the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, which make it evident that thus it *was*. Shall I mention the example of our *Lord*, *who went about doing good*, Acts x. 38? ſhall I propoſe the labours and travels of St. *Paul?* theſe patterns it may be will be judged by ſome too bright and dazling a light for us to look on, or at leaſt too perfect for us to copy after; and yet St. *John* tells us, that *he, who ſays he abides in him, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked*, 1 John ii. 6. And we are exhorted to *be followers of the apoſtles, as they were of Chriſt*. But if the fervency of *Chriſt* and St. *Paul* ſeemed to have ſoared out of the reach of our imitation, we have *inferior* inſtances enough, to prove the zeal and fruitfulneſs of *habitual* goodneſs. Thus *David* ſays of himſelf, *Pſal.* cxix. 10. *With my whole heart have I ſought thee*. And *Joſiah*, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 25. is ſaid to have *turned to the Lord with all his ſoul, and with all his might*. How fervent was *Anna*, who *departed not from the temple, but ſerved God with faſtings and prayers night and day*, Luke ii. 37? How charitable *Tabitha*, who *was full of good works and alms-deeds which ſhe did*, Acts ix. 36? where ſhall I place *Cornelius?* with what words ſhall I ſet out his virtues? with *what* but thoſe of the *Holy Ghoſt*, Acts x. 2. *He was a devout man*,

man, and one that feared God with all his houſe, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. But peradventure ſome may imagine, that there is ſomething ſingular and extraordinary in theſe eminent perſons, which we muſt never hope to equal; but muſt be content to follow them at a vaſt diſtance. Well, let this be ſo; what have we to ſay to whole *churches* animated by the ſame ſpirit of zeal? what are we to think of the *churches* of *Macedonia*, whoſe *charity* St. *Paul* thus magnifies, 2 *Cor.* viii. 2, 3. *In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themſelves.* And St. *Paul* declares himſelf *perſuaded* of the *Romans, that they were full of goodneſs, filled with all knowledge*, Rom. xv. 14. And of the *Corinthians* he teſtifies, *that they were inriched in every thing, and came behind in no gift.* 1 Cor. i. 5, 6. *That they did abound in all things, in faith, in diligence*, &c. 2 Cor. viii. 7. I will ſtop here; 'tis in vain to heap up more inſtances: I have ſaid enough to ſhew, that *vigour* and *fervency* in the ſervice of God, is no miraculous gift, no extraordinary prerogative of ſome peculiar favourite of heaven, but the natural and inſeparable *property* of a well-confirmed *habit* of holineſs.

Laſtly;

Laſtly; Is *conſtancy* and *ſteadineſs* the property of an *habit*? it is an undoubted property of *perfection* too. In *ſcripture* good men are every-where repreſented *as ſtanding faſt in the faith*; *ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the works of God*; *holding faſt their integrity*: in one word, as conſtantly following after righteouſneſs, and maintaining a good conſcience towards God and man. And ſo natural is this to one *habitually* good, that St. *John* affirms of ſuch a one, *that he cannot ſin*; 1 John iii. 9. *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin, for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.* Accordingly, *Job* is ſaid *to have feared God, and eſchewed evil*; which muſt be underſtood of the conſtant courſe of his life. *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* are ſaid to be *righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameleſs*, Luke i. 6. *Enoch*, *Noah*, *David*, and other excellent perſons, who are pronounced by God *righteous*, and *juſt*, and *perfect*, are ſaid in *ſcripture*, *to walk with God*, *to ſerve him with a perfect heart with a full purpoſe of heart to cleave to him*, and the like. And this is that *conſtancy* which *Chriſtians* are often exhorted to; *watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit ye like men, be ſtrong*, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. And of which the firſt followers of our *Lord* left us ſuch remarkable *examples*. The *diſciples* are

ſaid

ſaid to have been continually in the temple *bleſſing and praiſing God*, Luke xxiv. And the *firſt Chriſtians* are ſaid to *have continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, Acts ii. 42.

Thus I think I have ſufficiently cleared my notion of *Perfection* from *ſcripture*: nor need I multiply more texts, to prove what I think no man can doubt of, unleſs he miſtake the main deſign and end of the *goſpel*; which is to raiſe and exalt us to a ſteady *habit* of holineſs: *The end of the commandment*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. i. 5. *is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned.* This is the utmoſt *Perfection* man is capable of, to have his mind enlightened, and his heart purified; and to be informed, acted, and influenced by faith and love, as by a vital principle: and all this is eſſential to *habitual* goodneſs.

If any one deſire *further* light or ſatisfaction in this matter, let him read the eighth *chapter* to the *Romans*, and he will ſoon acknowledge, that he there finds the ſubſtance of what I have hitherto advanced. *There*, though the *word* itſelf be not found, the *thing* called *Perfection* is deſcribed in all the ſtrength and beauty, in all the pleaſure and advantages of it: there the diſciple of *Jeſus* is repreſented

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as one, *who walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit*; as one, *whom the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set free from the law of sin and death*; one, who ὁ φρονῶν, *does not mind or relish the things of the flesh, but the things of the spirit*; one, *in whom the spirit of Christ dwells:* he does not stand at the door, and knock; he does not make a transient visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: one finally, in whom *the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.* And the result of all this is the joy and confidence, the security and transport that becomes the child of God. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* And now 'tis no wonder, if the *perfect* man *long for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God*; if he cry out in rapture, *If God be for me, who can be against me? who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? who shall separate me from the love of Christ?* and so on. If any one would see the *perfect* man described in *fewer* words, he needs but cast his eye on *Rom.* vi. 22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

This notion of Perfection countenanced by all parties, however different in their expreſſions. Some ſhort reflections upon what the Pelagians, *the* Papiſts, *the* Quakers, *and the* myſtical *writers, have ſaid concerning* Perfection.

AFTER I have ſhewed that this notion of *Perfection* is warranted by *reaſon* and *ſcripture*; I ſee not why I ſhould be very ſolicitous whether it do or do not claſh with the *opinions* of men. But the truth is, if we examine not ſo much the *expreſſions* and *words*, as the *ſenſe* and *meaning* of all *parties* about this matter, we ſhall find them well enough *agreed* in it at the bottom. And 'tis no wonder, if (notwithſtanding ſeveral incidental *diſputes*) they ſhould yet agree in the *main:* ſince the experience of mankind does eaſily teach us *what* ſort of *Perfection* human *nature* is capable of; and what can, or cannot actually be attained by *man.* The *Pelagians* did not contend for an *angelical Perfection*, nor St. *Auſtin* deny *ſuch* a one as was truly *ſuitable to man:* the *one* could not be ſo far a ſtranger to *human nature*, as to exempt it in reality from thoſe errors and defects which the beſt of men complain of,

and labour againſt. Nor was St. *Auſtin* ſo little acquainted with the *power of the goſpel*, and of the *ſpirit*, as not to be well enough aſſured that man might be *habitually good*, and that ſuch were influenced and acted by a firm faith, and a fervent love, and well-grounded hope. The *diſpute* between them then, concerning *Perfection*, did not conſiſt in *this*, whether men might be *habitually* good? This was in reality *acknowledged* on *both* ſides: nor, whether the beſt men were ſubject to defects? For *this* too *both* ſides could not but be ſenſible of: but in theſe *two things* eſpecially; *Firſt*, *What* was to be attributed to *grace*, *what* to *nature?* and this relates not to the *definition* or *eſſence* of *Perfection*, but to the *ſource* and *origin* of it. *Secondly*, Whether thoſe *irregular* motions, defects, and errors, to which the beſt men were ſubject, were to be accounted *ſins*, or not? neither the one ſide nor the other then, as far as I can diſcern, did in truth miſtake the nature of *human Perfection:* each placed it in *habitual* righteouſneſs; the one contended for no *more*, nor did the other contend for *leſs*, in the *perfect* man. And when the *one* aſſerted him free from *ſin*, he did not aſſert him free from *defects:* And while the *other* would not allow the beſt man to be without *ſin*, they did not by *ſin* underſtand

ſtand any thing elſe, but ſuch *diſorders*, *oppoſitions* to, or *deviations* from the law of *God*, as the *Pelagian* himſelf muſt needs own to be in the *perfect* man. The diſpute then was not, *what* man might or might not attain to? for both ſides agreed him capable of the ſame *habitual* righteouſneſs; both ſides allowed him ſubject to the ſame *frailties:* but *one* ſide would have theſe *frailties* accounted *ſins*, and the *other* would *not*.

Numerous indeed have been the controverſies between the *popiſh* and *reformed churches*, about *precept* and *counſel*, *mortal* and *venial* ſin, the *poſſibility* of fulfilling the law of *God*, the *merit* of good works, and ſuch like. But after all, if we enquire what that *height* of *virtue* is to which the beſt of men may arrive; what thoſe *frailties* and *infirmities* are, to which they are ſubject; 'twere, I think, eaſy to ſhew, that the wiſe and good are on all hands *agreed* about this. Nor does it much concern my preſent purpoſe, in what ſenſe, or on what account *Papiſts* think ſome ſins venial, and *Proteſtants* deny them to be ſo; ſince neither the one nor the other exempt the *perfect* man from *infirmities*, nor aſſert any other *height* of *Perfection*, than what conſiſts in a conſummate and well-eſtabliſhed *habit* of virtue. Some men may, and do talk very extravagantly;

but it is very hard to imagine that ſober and pious men ſhould run in with them. *Such*, when they talk of *fulfilling* the law of *God*, and keeping his commandments, muſt ſurely underſtand this of the law of *God* in a *gracious* and *equitable* ſenſe: And this is no more than what the *ſcripture* aſſerts of every ſincere *Chriſtian*. When they talk of I know not what tranſcendent *Perfection* in *monkery*, they muſt ſurely mean nothing more, than that poverty, chaſtity, and obedience, are *heroick* inſtances of faith and love, of poverty of ſpirit, and purity of heart; and that an *Aſcetick* diſcipline is the moſt compendious and effectual way to a conſummate *habit* of righteouſneſs. *Finally*, By the diſtinction of *precept* and *counſel*, ſuch can never intend ſurely more than this, that we are obliged to *ſome* things under pain of damnation; to *others*, by the hopes of greater degrees of glory: for 'tis not eaſy for me to comprehend, that any man, whoſe judgment is not enſlaved to the dictates of his *party*, ſhould deny *either* of theſe *two* truths. 1. That whatever is neither forbidden nor commanded by any law of *God*, is *indifferent*. 2. That no man can do more than love the *Lord* his *God* with all his heart, with all his ſoul, and with all his might, and his neighbour as himſelf. I ſay, there is no degree or inſtance of *obedience*, that

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is not compriz'd within the *latitude* and *perfection* of theſe words. But whatever ſome of the *Church* of *Rome*, or it may be the greater part of it may think; this, 'tis plain, was the ſenſe of the *ancients*. St. *Auſtin* (*a*) could never underſtand any merit or excellence in thoſe things that were matter of counſel, not precept, unleſs they flowed from, and had regard to the love of God and our neighbour. And *Caſſian*'s (*b*) excellent *Monks* reſolved all the value of ſuch things to conſiſt in their tendency to promote apoſtolical purity and charity. And *Gregory Nazianzen* (*c*) thought it very extravagant, to pretend to be *perfecter* than the *rule*, and *exacter* than the *law*.

(*a*) *Quæcunq; non* jubentur, *ſed ſpecialí conſilio* monentur, *tum rectè fiunt, cum referuntur ad diligendum Deum, & proximum propter Deum,* Aug. Ench. *cap.* 121.

The *Quakers* have made much noiſe and ſtir about the doctrine of *Perfection*, and have reflected very ſeverely on others, as ſubverting the great deſign of our redemption (which is deliverance from ſin) and upholding the kingdom of darkneſs: but with what *juſtice*, will eaſily appear when I have repreſented their *ſenſe*, which I will do very *impartially*, and in as few

(*b*) *Ac proinde ea quibus qualitates ſtatutas videmus, & tempora; & quæ ſic obſervata ſanctificant, ut omiſſa non pulluant.* Media *eſſe manifeſtum eſt, ut puta nuptias, agriculturam, divitias, ſolitudinis remotionem*, &c. Caſſian. Colla. Patr. *Talem igitur definitionem ſupra jejunii*, &c. *Nec in ipſo ſpei noſtræ terminum defigamus, ſed ut per ipſum ad puritatem cordis & apoſtolicam charitatem pervenire poſſimus*; ibid.

(*c*) Μηδὲ τῷ νόμῳ νομιμότερος, μηδὲ λαμπρότερος τῷ Φωτὸς, μηδὲ τῷ κανόνι ἰσθύτερος, μηδὲ τῷ ἐντολῇ ὑψηλότερος. Greg. Nazian.

and plain words as I can. Mr. *W. P.* (*d* tells us, *That they are ſo far infallible and perfect, as they are led by the Spirit.* This is indeed *true*, but 'tis mere *trifling*: for *this* is an *infallibility* and *perfection* which no man denies, who believes in the *Holy Ghoſt*; ſince whoever follows *his* guidance muſt be in the right, unleſs the *Holy Ghoſt* himſelf be in the wrong. He urges, 'tis true, a great number of *ſcriptures* to *ſhew* (they are his own words) *that a ſtate of Perfection from ſin (tho' not in fulneſs of wiſdom and glory) is attainable in this life*; but this is too dark and ſhort a hint to infer the ſenſe of his *party* from it. Mr. *Ed. Burroughs* (*e*) is more full: *We believe* (ſaith he) *that the ſaints upon earth may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and may be perfectly freed from the body of ſin and death, and in Chriſt may be perfect and without ſin, and may have victory over all temptations, by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. And we believe every ſaint, that is called of God, ought to preſs after Perfection, and to overcome the devil and all his temptations upon earth: and we believe, they that faithfully wait for it, ſhall obtain it, and ſhall be preſented without ſin in the image of the father; and ſuch walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit, and are in covenant with God, and their ſins are blotted out, and remembered*

(*d*) A Key opening, &c.

(*e*) Principles of Truth, &c.

bered no more; for they ceaſe to commit ſin, being born of the ſeed of God. If by *ſin* here, he means, as he ſeems to do, *deliberate* or *preſumptuous* ſin; I do not think any eſtabliſhed *Church*, whether *Proteſtant* or *Popiſh*, teaches otherwiſe. Mr. *Barclay* (*f*) goes very *methodically* to work, and *firſt* ſets down the ſtate of the queſtion; *then* confutes *thoſe* that differ from him; anſwers their objections out of *ſcripture*; and, *laſtly*, eſtabliſhes his own doctrine. As to the *Perfection* which he aſſerts, he lets us know, that it is to be derived from the *Spirit* of *Chriſt*; that it conſiſts not in an impoſſibility of ſinning, but a poſſibility of not ſinning; and that this *perfect* man is capable of daily growth and improvement. When to this I have added, that he ſpeaks all along of *that* which we call *wilful ſin*, as appears from his deſcription of *it*; for he calls it *iniquity*, *wickedneſs*, *impurity*, the *ſervice* of *Satan*, and attributes ſuch effects to it as belong not at all to what we call *ſins* of *infirmity*; when, I ſay, *this* is added to render the ſenſe *clear*, I can readily ſubſcribe to him: for, I know no ſuch doctrines in our *Church* as thoſe which he there oppoſes; namely, that the *regenerate* are to live in *ſin*, and that their *good works* are *impure* and *ſinful*. But then, he either miſtakes the main point in debate,

(*f*) *Apol. Theſ.* 8.

or prudently declines: for the queſtion is not, whether good men may live in *mortal* or *wilful ſin*, but whether good men are not ſubject to *frailties* and *infirmities*, which are indeed *ſins*, tho' not *imputable* under the covenant of *grace?* Whether the *Quakers* are not in this point *Pelagians*, I do not now enquire; becauſe if they be, they are already conſidered. Two things there are in Mr. *Barclay*'s ſtate of the queſtion, which I cannot ſo well approve of; the *one* is, that he expreſſes himſelf ſo injudiciouſly about the growth and improvement of his *perfect* man, that he ſeems to forget the difference the *ſcriptures* make between *babes* and full *grown* men in *Chriſt*, and to place Perfection ſo low in reference to *poſitive* righteouſneſs or virtue, as if it conſiſted in *negative* only or ceaſing from ſin. The *other* is, that tho' he does not peremptorily *affirm* a ſtate of *impeccability* attainable in this life; yet he ſeems inclinable to *believe* it, and imagines it countenanced by 1 *John* iii. 9. But he ought to have conſidered, that whatever *impeccability* may be inferred from that *text*, it is attributed, not to ſome extraordinary perſons, but to all, whoſoever they be, that are born of *God*; but this is out of my way. All that I am to obſerve upon the whole is, that theſe men place *Perfection* eſpecially in refraining

refraining from *ſin*: I advance *higher*, and place it in a well-ſettled *habit* of righteouſneſs. And I believe they will be as little diſſatisfied with me for this, as I am with them, for aſſerting the perfect man freed from ſin. For, as Mr. *Barclay* expreſſes himſelf, I think he has in reality no adverſaries but *Antinomians* and *Ranters*.

As to that Perfection which is magnified by *myſtical* writers, ſome of them have only darkened and obſcured the plain ſenſe of the *goſpel*, by figurative and unintelligible terms. *Thoſe* of them, which write with more life and heat than other men ordinarily do, recommend nothing but that *holineſs* which begins in the *fear*, and is conſummate in the *love* of God; which enlightens the mind, purifies the heart, and fixes and unites man to his ſoveraign good, that is, *God*: and I am ſure I ſhall not differ with *theſe*.

There are, I confeſs, almoſt innumerable ſayings of the *fathers*, which ſufficiently teſtify how little friends they were to *Perfection*, in ſuch a notion of it as is too generally embraced in the Church of *Rome*. The *primitive* ſpirit breathed nothing but *humility*: it was a profeſſed enemy to all ſelf-confidence and arrogance, to ſupererogation and merit; and it invited men earneſtly to reflect upon the

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ſins and *ſlips* of life, and on that *oppoſition* which the law of the *body* maintains againſt the law of the *mind*, in ſome degree or other, in the *beſt* men. This conſideration forced the *biſhop* of *Condome* to that plain and honeſt *confeſſion*; *Itaque Juſtitia noſtra, licet per charitatis infuſionem ſit vera*, &c. *Tho' our righteouſneſs, becauſe of that love which the Spirit ſheds abroad in our heart, be ſincere and real; yet it is not abſolute and conſummate, becauſe of the oppoſition of concupiſcenſe: ſo that it is an indiſpenſable duty of Chriſtianity, to be perpetually bewailing the errors of life: Wherefore we are obliged humbly to confeſs with St.* Auſtin, *that our righteouſneſs in this life conſiſts rather in the pardon of our ſins, than in the perfection of our virtues.* All this is undoubtedly true, but concerns not me: I never dream of any man's paſſing the courſe of life *without ſin*: nor do I contend for ſuch a *Perfection* as St. *Auſtin* calls *abſolute*, which will admit of no increaſe, and is exempt from defects and errors. Tho' on the *other* hand, I confeſs, I cannot but think, ſome carry this matter too far; and while they labour to abate the *pride* and *confidence* of man, give too much encouragement to *negligence* and *preſumption*. I cannot ſee how frequent relapſes into *deliberate* acts of wickedneſs can conſiſt with a well-ſettled

tled and eſtabliſhed *habit* of goodneſs. The heat of diſpute in ſome, and a ſort of *implicite* faith for their *authority* in others, has produced many *unwary expreſſions*, and I doubt very *unſound* and pernicious *notions* about this matter.

CHAP. III.

Several inferences deduced from the true notion of Perfection. With a plain method how perſons may judge of their preſent ſtate. The difference between the extraordinary primitive converſions, and thoſe which may be expected in our days, with a remark about infuſed *habits.*

HAVING in the *two former* chapters fixed the notion of religious *Perfection*, and proved it conſonant to *reaſon* and *ſcripture*; and not ſo only, but alſo made it appear, that it is countenanced by the unanimous *conſent* of *all*, who have ever handled this ſubject: I have nothing now to do, but by way of *inference* to repreſent the *advantages* we may reap from it.

1. It is from hence plain, that *Perfection* muſt not be placed in fantaſtick ſpeculations or voluntary obſervances, but in the ſolid and uſeful *virtues* of the *goſpel*; in the

the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope; in the purity and humility of a child of light; in the conſtancy and magnanimity which becomes one who has brought the body into ſubjection, and has ſet his affections on things above. *This* ſtate of *Perfection* is well enough deſcribed by the rule of St. *Bennet. Ergo his omnibus humilitatis gradibus aſcenſis, monachus mox ad charitatem,* &c. *The monk, having paſſed through theſe ſeveral ſtages of humility or mortification, will arrive at that love of God which caſteth out fear; by which he will be enabled to perform all things with eaſe and pleaſure, and, as it were, naturally, which before he performed with reluctancy and dread; being now moved and acted, not by the terrors of hell, but by a delight in goodneſs, and the force of an excellent habit: both which, Chriſt by his Spirit vouchſafes to increaſe and exalt in his ſervants now cleanſed and purged from all ſin and vice.*

2. This notion of *Perfection* proves all men to lie under an *obligation* to it: for as all are *capable* of an *habit* of holineſs; ſo is it the duty of all to *endeavour* after it. If *Perfection* were indeed an *angelical* ſtate; if it did conſiſt in an exemption from all defects and infirmities, and in ſuch an elevation of virtue, to which nothing can be added; *then*, I confeſs, all *diſ-*

courſes

courſes of it, and much more all *attempts* after it, would be vain, and inſolent too. *If* again, it did conſiſt in ſome *heroick* pitch of virtue, which ſhould appear to have ſomething ſo *ſingular* in it, as ſhould make it look more like a *miracle* than a *duty*, it were *then* to be expected but once in an *age* from ſome *extraordinary* perſon, called to it by peculiar *inſpiration* and extraordinary *gifts*. But if *Chriſtian Perfection* be, as I have proved, only a well confirmed *habit* in goodneſs; if it differ from *ſincerity* only, when *ſincerity* is in its *weakneſs* and *infancy*, not when *grown* up; then 'tis plain, that *every Chriſtian* lies under an *obligation* to *it*. Accordingly the *ſcripture* exhorts all *to perfect holineſs in the fear of God, to go on to Perfection*, Heb. vi. and it aſſigns this as one great end of the inſtitution of a ſtanding *miniſtry* in the *churches* of *Chriſt*, namely, *the perfecting the ſaints, the edifying the body of Chriſt; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*, Epheſ. iv. 12, 13. And hence it is, that we find the *apoſtles* purſuing this great end, by their *prayers* and *labours*, earneſtly contending and endeavouring to preſent all Chriſtians *perfect* before *God*, 1 Theſſ. iii. 10. *Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might ſee your face, and might perfect*

that

that which is lacking in your faith, Coloſ. i. 28. *When we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wiſdom, that we may preſent every man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſee 1 *Pet.* v. 10. *Coloſ.* iv. 13. Nay further, the *ſcripture* frequently puts us in mind, that they are in a ſtate of *danger*, who do not *proceed* and *grow* in grace, and preſs on towards *Perfection*. Now all this is very eaſily accountable, taking *Perfection* for a well ſettled *habit* of holineſs; but on no *other* notion of it.

3. This account of *Perfection* removes *thoſe ſcruples* which are often ſtarted about the *degrees* of holineſs and *meaſures* of duty, and are wont to diſturb the peace, clog the vigour, and damp the alacrity of many well-meaning and good people. Nay, many of acute parts and good learning are often puzzled about this matter: ſome teaching, that man is not bound to do his beſt; others on the quite contrary, that he is ſo far bound to it, that he is always obliged to *purſue* the moſt *perfect duty*, to *chuſe* the moſt *perfect* means, and to exert the *utmoſt* of that *ſtrength*, and act according to the *utmoſt* of that *capacity* with which God has endowed him. Now all theſe things, when we come to apply theſe *general* doctrines to *particular* inſtances, and a vaſt variety of *circumſtances*, have ſo much *latitude*, ambiguity, and

and uncertainty in them, that men of *tender* conſciences, and *defective* underſtandings, reap nothing from ſuch high-flown *indefinite* diſcourſes, but *doubts* and *ſcruples*. It requires a ſtrong and penetrating judgment to reſolve what is the utmoſt *extent* of our power and capacity; *what* the *beſt* mean, and what the *moſt perfect* duty, when *many* preſent themſelves to us, and all *variouſly* circumſtantiated. But now, as I have ſtated matters, we are bound indeed to purſue and labour after *growth* and *improvement* in the love of God, and charity towards our neighbour, in purity, humility, and the like. And this we ſhall certainly do, if we be *ſincere*; in other matters we are left to our *prudence*, and if the error of our *choice* proceed only from an error in *judgment*, and a *corruption* in our *hearts*, we are *ſafe* enough.

4. 'Tis very eaſy to *diſcern* now *where* we ſtand in reference to *Perfection*; how *remote* we are from it, or how *near* to it. For the *nature* of an *habit* being plain and intelligible, the *effects* and *properties* of it obvious to the meaneſt capacity, 'tis *eaſy* to determine, upon an impartial *examination*, whether we be *habitually* good or not, or what *approaches* we have made towards it. And becauſe this is a matter of no ſmall *importance*, and men are generally back-

backward enough to advance too far into ſuch *reflections* and *applications*, as may breed any *diſturbance* to their *peace*, or any *diminution* of their good *opinion* for *themſelves*, tho' neither the one nor the other be too well grounded; I ſhall not think my time miſpent, if I here take this task upon me; and endeavour by ſeveral *particular* deductions, to lay every man's *ſtate* as plainly open to his *view* as I can.

1. Then, from the notion I have given of *Perfection*, it appears, that *if* a man's life be very *uneven*, unconſtant, and contradictory to itſelf; if he be to day a *ſaint*, and to morrow a *ſinner*; if he yield to day to the motives of the *goſpel* and impulſes of the *ſpirit*, and to morrow to the ſollicitations of the *fleſh* and temptations of the *world*, he is far from being *perfect*; ſo far, that there is not ground enough to conclude him *a ſincere* or *real*, tho' *imperfect*, convert. The only certain proof of *regeneration* is victory; *he that is born of God, overcometh the world*, 1 John v. 4. *faith*, tho' it be *true*, is not preſently *ſaving* and *juſtifying*, till it have ſubdued the *will* and captivated the heart, *i. e.* till we begin to *live* by *faith*; which is evident from *that* corn in the *parable*, which tho' it ſhot up, yet had it not *depth* of earth, nor *root* enough, and therefore was *withered* up, and brought forth *no* fruit. Regret and

and ſorrow for ſin is an excellent paſſion; but till it has ſubdued our corruptions, changed our affections, and purified our hearts, 'tis not that *ſaving* repentance in the apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* vii. 10. *Godly ſorrow worketh repentance, not to be repented of.* We may have ſudden heats and paſſions for virtue; but if they be too ſhort-liv'd to implant it in us, this is *not* that *charity* or *love* which animates and impregnates the new creature mentioned, *Gal.* v. 6. *faith working by love.* Laſtly, We may have good purpoſes, intentions, nay, reſolutions; but if theſe prove too weak to obtain a *conqueſt* over our *corruptions*, if they prove too weak to reſiſt the *temptations* we are wont to fall by, 'tis plain that they are not ſuch as can demonſtrate us *righteous*, or entitle us to a *crown*, which is promiſed to him that *overcometh.* And here I cannot but remark, to how little purpoſe *controverſies* have been multiplied about the *juſtification* of man. 'Tis *one* thing for *God* to *juſtify us*, *i. e.* to *pardon* our *ſins*, and account us *righteous*, and *his* children; and *another* for us to *know*, or be *aſſured*, that he does ſo. If we enquire after the *former*, 'tis plain to me, that no man can be *accounted* righteous by *God*, till he really *is* ſo: and when the man is *ſanctified* throughout in ſpirit, ſoul, and body; then is he certainly *juſtified*, and

not till then. And this I think is confeſſed by all, except *Antinomians*; and whatever *difference* there is amongſt *Chriſtians* in this matter, it lies in the forms and variety of *expreſſion*. They, that contend earneſtly for the neceſſity of *good works*, do not, I ſuppoſe, imagine, that the *works* are holy, before the *heart* is ſo; for, as is the *fountain*, ſuch will be its *ſtreams*; as is the *tree*, ſuch will be its *fruits*. What abſurdity then is there in admitting that men are juſtified before they bring forth good works; if they cannot bring forth good works, till they be ſanctified and changed? on the other hand, they who contend ſo earneſtly for *juſtification* by *faith* without *works*, do not only ſuppoſe that the man is throughly changed, by the *infuſion* of *habitual grace*; but alſo that this grace, as ſoon as it has opportunity, will exert and expreſs itſelf in *good works*: and they do readily acknowledge that the *faith* which does *not* work by *love*, is an *hiſtorical* unanimated *faith*. And if ſo, how natural is it to comprife in that holineſs, which *juſtifies*, not only the change of the *heart*, but of the *actions*? but here I think it is well worth the conſidering, whether that thorough *change* in the *nature* of a ſinner, which is called *holineſs*, be now effected at *once* and in a *moment*, and not rather *gradually* and in *time*? for this may give

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ſome light to the doctrine of *juſtification*, and draw us off from ſpeculations and theories to more uſeful and practical thoughts and diſcourſes about it. 'Tis true, in the *primitive* times, when the conviction of a ſinner was wrought by a dazling light, by ſurprizing miracles, by exuberant influxes of the *ſpirit*, and the concurrence of many extraordinary things, *ſanctification* (as in the *goaler* and his *family*, Acts xvi.) might be *begun* and *finiſhed* in the *ſame* hour. But I doubt it is *rarely* ſo with us at *this* day; our vices are not ſo ſuddenly ſubdued, nor our virtues ſo ſuddenly implanted. *Our* convictions, in the beginning of converſion, are ſeldom ſo full and clear as *theirs:* and, if we may judge by the *effects*, 'tis but ſeldom that the principle of a new life is infuſed in the *ſame* plenty and power it appears to have been in *them*. And if ſo, then theſe things will follow; 1. Though in the firſt *plantation* of the *goſpel* men being converted, as it were, in a *moment*, ingrafted by *baptiſm* into *Chriſt*, and receiving the *Holy Ghoſt*, the *earneſt* of their *juſtification* or acceptance with *God*, and their future *glory:* we may very well ſay of them, that they were not only *juſtified*, but alſo *knew* themſelves to be ſo, *before* they had brought forth any other *fruit* of righteouſneſs, than what was implied in

the *dedication* of themſelves to *Chriſt* by that ſolemn rite of *baptiſm*: but at *this* day, when converſion is not effected in the ſame manner; when faith and good works do mutually cheriſh one another; when righteouſneſs is not brought forth into victory, but by *long* labour and travel; I ſee not why *faith* and *good works* may not be pronounced *jointly* and *antecedently* neceſſary to our *juſtification*. 2. The doctrine of *infuſed habits* has been much ridiculed and expoſed as abſurd, by ſome men; and, I muſt confeſs, if it be *eſſential* to a *habit*, to be acquired by length of time and repetition of the ſame acts, then an *infuſed habit* is a very *odd* expreſſion: but why *God* cannot produce in us thoſe ſtrong diſpoſitions to virtue in a *moment*, which are *naturally* produced by *time*; or why *we* may not aſcribe as much efficacy to *infuſed grace*, as philoſophers are wont to do to *repeated acts*, I cannot ſee? nor can I ſee, why ſuch *diſpoſitions*, when *infuſed*, may not be called *habits*, if they have all the *properties* and *effects* of an habit. And that ſuch excellent diſpoſitions *were* on a ſudden wrought in the minds of Chriſtians in the beginning of Chriſtianity, is too plain from the hiſtory of thoſe times to need a proof. But whether ſuch changes are ordinarily effected ſo ſuddenly at *this* day, we have much reaſon to *doubt*;

doubt; nay, I think it appears from what I have ſaid, there is ſufficient reaſon to *deny* it. And, if ſo, the *infuſion* of *habits* cannot be ſo properly inſiſted on *now* as *then*; and *we* may be more ſubject to make *unwarrantable* inferences from the doctrine of *infuſed habits*, than *they* were in thoſe bright and *miraculous* days. 3. As our *progreſs* to *ſanctification* muſt be *ſlower* than formerly, as it muſt be *longer* before the grace that is infuſed, ſo far maſter our corruption and dilate and diffuſe itſelf through our whole nature, as that we may juſtly be denominated *holy* and *righteous* from the prevalence of this holy principle: ſo, by a neceſſary conſequence, our *juſtification* muſt commence *later*. But, after all, I know not why we ſhould be ſo inquiſitive after the *time* of our *juſtification* by *God*. The *comfort* of a Chriſtian does not reſult immediately from *God's juſtifying* him, but from *his knowing* that he does ſo. And if this be the thing we are now ſearching after, namely, what rational *aſſurance* we can have of our *juſtification*, and when, as indeed it is; then, though I do not pretend to determine, that man *is* not, or *may* not be juſtified or accounted righteous by *God*, upon a thorough change of mind or ſoul, before this change *diſcovers* itſelf in a ſeries of *victories* over thoſe *temptations* by which he was led *captive* before; yet I aſſert,

first, that the true and solid proof of the *sanctification* of the *heart*, is *sanctity* of life. *Next*, when I talk of *victory*, I suppose man *engaged*, I suppose him *encountered* by *temptations* and *enemies*; and *then* I affirm, that the *faith*, which is not strong enough to *conquer*, is not strong enough to *justify*. If any man demand, may not that faith, which is foiled to *day*, conquer to *morrow*? I answer, I must leave this to *God*: I can pronounce nothing of the *sincerity* of the heart, but by the outward *deportment* and *success*. And if this be the proper way of judging of a man's sincerity, I am sure I may with much more confidence affirm, that nothing less than *victory* can be a clear argument of *Perfection*. My business therefore shall ever be to be *Holy*, and then I am *sure* I shall be *justified*. If *I be* Holy, *God*, who cannot err, will certainly *account* me so; and if I *cease* to *be* so, *God* must *cease* to *account* me so. And this is all which I design by this long paragraph: that is, to render Men more careful and diligent in making their calling and election sure, and to prevent presumption and groundless confidence. And that nothing that I have here *said* may be perverted to a *contrary* purpose; that no man, from some passionate resolutions or sudden changes of his own mind, may be tempted to conclude too *hastily* of his being *justified*,

juſtified, as if the change wrought in him were equal to that commonly effected in the *firſt* converts of *Chriſtianity*; I think it not amiſs to put ſuch a one in mind, that even *theſe* were not juſtified, unleſs they did *profeſs Chriſt* with the *mouth*, as well as *believe* in him with the *heart*; and that this *publick* profeſſion of Chriſtianity in *thoſe* days was equivalent to *many* good works in *theſe*.

2*dly*, He, that feels in himſelf little or no fervency of ſpirit, little or no hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, has reaſon to ſuſpect, that his *regularity* is little more than common *decency* and *civility*, and to doubt, leſt his *religion* be nothing elſe but *cuſtom* or common *prudence*. I ſee not *how* ſo much *indifference* and *ſluggiſhneſs* can conſiſt with a firm *belief* and *expectation* of a *crown*, with a ſincere *love* of *God* and *righteouſneſs*. But if we may ſuppoſe ſuch a one reſtrained from evil, and preſerved in the way of duty, after a ſort, by the *fear* of *God*, and a *deſire* of *heaven*; yet certainly this can be but the *infancy* of the *new creature* at moſt: and the beſt advice, that can be given ſuch a one, is ſurely that of St. *Peter*, that *by adding one degree of virtue to another, he would uſe all diligence to make his calling and election ſure*, 2 Pet. i. 10.

3*dly*, If a man's religion produce very *few* good works, or ſuch only as put him

to little travel or expence, we may conclude that this man is not *perfect*; his charity is too weak, too narrow to be that of an *exalted* Christian: the best that we can think of such a one is, that he is yet taken up in the *discipline* of *mortification*, that he is *contending* with his *lusts* and *passions*, which are not yet so far reduced, so far subdued and brought under, as to leave him in a state of *liberty* and *peace*, and in a capacity of *extending* and *enlarging* his *charity*. This remark, that the *inconsiderableness* of our good works is reason enough to question, not only one's *Perfection* but *sincerity*, holds good in *such* cases only, where neither *opportunity* nor *capacity* of higher and nobler performances is wanting. I dare not pronounce, that no man can be a *Christian*, unless he be fit to be a *martyr*: 'tis true, the *lowest* degree of *sincerity* must imply a purpose and *resolution* of universal *obedience*, in defiance of all temptations; but yet *that* grace, for ought I can prove to the contrary, may be sufficient to *save* a man, that is sufficient to master the difficulties *he* is to encounter with, altho' he should not be able to grapple with the distempers and tryals to which the body and the state of *another* man may be subject. Surely the wisdom and the faithfulness of God can be no further concerned, than to qualify any one for the discharge

charge of *thoſe* duties which he thinks fit to *call* him to: and if the diſcharge of ſuch duties be not a ſufficient proof of our ſincerity, we can never have any, but muſt be always held in ſuſpence and torture about our future ſtate. I ſee no reaſon to queſtion, but that the diſciples of our Lord were in a ſtate of *grace* before the *reſurrection*, and the following *Pentecoſt:* and yet I think I have plain reaſon to believe, that they were not fit to be *martyrs* and *confeſſors* till then; the *grace* they had *before* might, I doubt it not, have enabled them to live *virtuouſly* amidſt *common* and *ordinary* temptations: but it was neceſſary that they ſhould be endowed with *power* from on *high*, before they could be fit to encounter thoſe *fiery trials*, to which the *preaching* of the *goſpel* was to expoſe them. To this ſurely our Maſter refers, when he tells the *Phariſees*, *That the children of the bride-chamber were not to faſt while the bridegroom was with them:* when he tells *his* diſciples, *I have many things to ſay, but you cannot bear them yet:* when he asked the ſons of *Zebedee, are ye able to drink of the cup that I ſhall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptiſm that I am baptized with?* Matth. xx. 21. If this be true divinity, as I am (I had almoſt ſaid) confident it is; then I am confident, that which requires very *unaccountable* teſts of a man's *ſincerity*, is very *extravagant*.

travagant. For example, when men talk at this rate, that a ſincere Chriſtian ſhould have ſuch an *abhorrence* for *ſin*, as to fear *guilt* more than its *puniſhment*: ſuch a *love* of *God*, as rather than offend him, to be content to precipitate and plunge himſelf into the jaws, not of *death*, like the martyrs, but of *hell* it ſelf.

4thly, If the duties of religion be very *troubleſome* and *uneaſy* to a man, we may from hence conclude, that he is not *perfect*: for tho' the *beginning* of wiſdom and virtue be generally *harſh* and *ſevere* to the *fool* and *ſinner*, yet to him that has *conquered*, the yoke of Chriſt is *eaſy*, and his burthen *light*; *to him that is filled with the love of God, his commandments are not grievous*; hence is that obſervation of the ſon of *Sirach*, Ecclus. iv. 17, 18. *For at the firſt ſhe will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her diſcipline, until ſhe may truſt his ſoul, and try him by her laws; then will ſhe return the ſtraight way unto him, and comfort him, and ſhew him her ſecrets.* The reaſon of this aſſertion is palpable; it is the nature of an *habit* to render *difficult* things *eaſy*, *harſh* things *pleaſant*, to *fix* a *floating* and *uncertain* humour, to nurſe and ripen a weak and tender *diſpoſition* into *nature*. And 'tis as reaſonable to expect theſe effects in *religious*, as in any *other* ſorts of *habits*.

Laſtly,

Lastly, He who does not find *religion* full of *pleasure*, who does not *glory* in God, and *rejoice* in our *Lord Jesus*, he who is not filled with an humble *assurance* of the *divine favour*, and a joyful *expectation* of *immortality* and *glory*, does yet *want* something; he is yet *defective*, with respect either to the *brightness* of *illumination*, the *absoluteness* of *liberty*, or the *ardor* of *love*; he may be a *good* man, and have gone a *great* way in his Christian *race*; but there is something still behind to *compleat* and *perfect* him; some *error* or other creates him groundless *scruples*; some *incumbrance* or *impediment* or other, whether an infelicity of temper, or the incommodiousness of his circumstances, or a little too warm an application towards something of the world, *retards* his vigour, and *abates* his *affections*.

I have now finished all that I can think necessary to form a general *idea* of religious *Perfection*: for I have not only given a plain *definition* or *description* of it, and *confirmed* and *fortified* that description by *reason* and *scripture*, and the *concurrent sense* of *all sides* and *parties*; but have also by various *inferences*, deduced from the *general* notion of *Perfection*, precluded all groundless *pretensions to it*, and enabled men to see how *far* they are *removed* and *distant* from it, or how *near* they *approach* it.

it. The *next* thing I am to do, according to the method I have propoſed, is, to conſider the *fruits* and *advantages* of *Perfection.* A conſideration which will furniſh us with many great, and, I hope, effectual *incitements* or *motives* to it; and demonſtrate its *ſubſerviency* to our *happineſs.*

CHAP. IV.

A general account of the bleſſed fruits *and* advantages *of Religious Perfection. Which is reduced to theſe four heads.* 1. *As it advances the honour of the true and living* God, *and of his Son* Jeſus, *in the world.* 2. *As it promotes the good of mankind. Theſe two treated of in the chapter of zeal.* 3. *As it produces in the perfect man a full aſſurance of eternal happineſs and glory.* 4. *As it puts him in poſſeſſion of true happineſs in this life. Theſe two laſt,* aſſurance, *and preſent* happineſs *or* pleaſure, *handled in this chapter. Where the pleaſures of the ſinner and of the perfect Chriſtian are compared.*

OF the *two former* I ſhall ſay nothing *here*; deſigning to inſiſt upon them more particularly in the *following* ſection, under

under the *head* of *zeal*, where I ſhall be obliged by my *method* to conſider the *fruit* of it; only I cannot *here* forbear *remarking*, that *Perfection*, while it promotes the honour of *God* and the good of *man*, does at the ſame time promote our *own happineſs* too; ſince it muſt on this account moſt effectually recommend us to the love of the *one* and the *other*; *Them that honour me*, ſaith God, *I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. And our Saviour obſerves, that even *Publicans and ſinners love thoſe who love them*, Matth. v. 46. Accordingly St. *Luke* tells us of Chriſt, *Luke* ii. 52. *That Jeſus increaſed in wiſdom and ſtature, and in favour with God and man*; and of thoſe eminently devout and charitable ſouls, *Acts* ii. *that they had favour with all the people*; ſo reſiſtleſs a charm is the beauty and lovelineſs of perfect charity, even in the moſt depraved and corrupt times. And what a *bleſſing* now, what a *comfort*, what a *pleaſure* is it, to be the favourite of *God* and *man!*

The *third* and *fourth* I will *now* diſcourſe of, and that the more *largely*, becauſe as to *aſſurance*, it is the *foundation* of that *pleaſure*, which is the richeſt *ingredient* of human *happineſs* in *this* life. And, *as to our preſent happineſs*, which is the *fourth* fruit of *Perfection*, it is the very *thing* for the ſake of which I have *engaged* in my *preſent*

present subject. And therefore it is very fit that I should render the tendency of *Perfection* to procure our *present happiness* very conspicuous. Beginning therefore with *assurance*, I will assert the *possibility* of attaining it in *this* life; not by embroiling my self in the brakes of several nice and subtle *speculations* with which this subject is over-grown; but by laying down in a *practical* manner, the *grounds* on which *assurance* depends; by which we shall be able at once to discern the truth of the *doctrine* of *assurance*, and its *dependance* upon *Perfection*.

Now *assurance* may relate to the time *present*, or to *come*: for the resolution of *two* questions, gives the mind a perfect *ease* about this matter. The *first* is, am I *assured* that I am at *present* in a state of grace? The *second*, am I *assured* that I shall *continue* so to my life's *end*? To begin with the *first*: the answer of this enquiry depends on *three* grounds.

First, A divine *revelation*, which declares in general, *who* shall be *saved*; namely, they *who believe* and *repent*. Nor does any *sect* doubt, but that *repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, as St. *Paul* speaks, are the indispensable *conditions* of life. 'Tis true, the notion of *repentance* is miserably *perverted* by *some*, and that of *faith* by *others*: but what remedy

medy is there againſt the luſts and paſſions of men? The *ſcripture* does not only *require* repentance and faith; but it *explains* and *deſcribes* the nature of *both*, by ſuch conſpicuous and infallible *characters*, that no man *can* be miſtaken in theſe *two* points, *but* his error muſt be owing to ſome criminal *prejudices* or *inclinations* that biaſs and pervert him. *Good* men have ever been *agreed* in theſe matters: and catholick *tradition* is no-where more *uncontroulable* than here: the general doctrine of all *ages* hath been, and in *this* ſtill is, that by *repentance* we are to underſtand a *new nature* and *new life*: and by *faith*, when diſtinguiſhed from *repentance* (as it ſometimes is in *ſcripture*) a *reliance* upon the *mercy* of *God* through the *merits* and *interceſſion* of *Jeſus*, and *atonement* of *his* blood. *Heaven* lies open to all that perform theſe *conditions*; every page of the *goſpel* atteſts this; *this* is the ſubſtance of *Chriſt*'s commiſſion to his *apoſtles*, that they ſhould preach *repentance* and *remiſſion* of ſins through his name amongſt *all* nations. And this is one bleſſed advantage, which *revealed* religion has above *natural*; that it contains an expreſs *declaration* of the Divine Will, concerning the *pardon* of all ſins whatſoever upon theſe *terms*. *Natural* religion indeed teaches us, that *God* is *merciful*; but it teaches

teaches us, that he is *juſt* too; and it can never *aſſure* us, what *bounds God* will ſet to the exerciſe of the *one* or the *other*; and *when* juſtice, and *when* mercy ſhall take place: *what* ſins *are*, and *what* are not capable of the benefit of ſacrifice and repentance. And this *uncertainty*, conſidering the ſins of the beſt life, was ever naturally apt to beget deſpondencies, melancholy, and ſometimes a ſuperſtitious dread of *God*.

The *ſecond* ground of aſſurance, as it relates to our preſent ſtate, is an *application* of the conditions of life laid down in the goſpel to a man's own *particular* caſe, thus; *they* that *believe* and *repent* ſhall be *ſaved*; *I believe* and *repent*, therefore *I* ſhall be *ſaved*. Now that a man upon an *examination* of himſelf, may be throughly *aſſured* that he *does* believe and repent, is evident from *ſcripture*, which does not only *exhort* us to enter upon this *examination*, but alſo aſſerts, that *aſſurance*, *joy* and *peace*, are the natural *fruits* of it: but *let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Examine your ſelves whether you be in the faith*; *prove your own ſelves: know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?* 2 Cor. xv. 5. *But ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts*; *and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that*

that asketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear, 1 Pet. iii. 13. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, 1 John ii. 3. *Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not*, then *have we confidence towards God*, 1 John iii. 2. 'Tis true, men do often *deceive* themſelves, and entertain a more favourable opinion of their ſtate than they ought. But *whence* proceeds this? Even from too *partial* or *ſuperficial* reflections on themſelves, or *none* at all. And therefore the apoſtle teaches us plainly, that the only way to correct this error, is a *ſincere* and *diligent* ſearch into our ſelves: *for if a man think himſelf to be ſomething when he is nothing, he deceiveth himſelf: but let every man prove his own work, and then ſhall he have rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another*, Gal. vi. 34. But it is *objected* againſt all this, that the *heart* of man is ſo *deceitful*, that it is a very difficult matter to make a thorough *diſcovery* of it. We often *think* our ſelves *ſincere*, when the ſucceſs of the next *temptation* gives us juſt reaſon to call this *ſincerity* into *queſtion*; ſuch is the contradictious *compoſition* of our nature, that we often act *contrary* to our inward *convictions*, and frequently fail in the *execution* of thoſe *deſigns*, in the *performance* of thoſe *reſolutions*, which we have *thought* very well *grounded*; and this being not to be charged upon the inſuffi-

ciency of God's *grace*, but the levity or insincerity of our own *hearts*, *how* can we *safely* frame any *right* opinion of our *selves* from those *affections* and *purposes*, which are so little to be *relied* upon? To this I *answer*. *First*, We are not to conclude any thing concerning our *progress* or *perfection* too *hastily*; we are not to determine of the final *issue* of a *war* by the *success* of *one* or *two* engagements; but our *hopes* and *assurances* are to advance slowly and gradually in *proportion* to the *abatement* of the *enemy's* force, and the *increase* of our *own*; so that we may have *time* enough to *examine* and *prove* our own hearts. *Secondly*, A *sincere* Christian, but especially one of a *mature* virtue, may easily *discern* his spiritual state, by the inward *movings* and *actings* of the soul, if he *attend* to them: for it is impossible that such a one should be *ignorant*, what *impressions* divine *truths* make upon him? Is it possible he should be *ignorant*, whether his *faith* stands *firm* against the shock of all *carnal* objections; whether he earnestly desire to please *God*, as loving him above all things; whether he thirst after the consolation and joy of the *Spirit*, more than after that of *sensible* things? Is it possible the soul should *bewail* its *heaviness* and *dryness*, which the best are liable to at some season or other? Is it possible that the soul should be *carried* upwards frequent-

frequently on the wings of *faith* and *love*, that it ſhould maintain a familiar and conſtant *converſation* with *heaven*, that it ſhould *long* to be *delivered* from this *world* of trouble, and this *body* of *death*, and to *enter* into the *regions* of peace, of life, and righteouſneſs? Is it poſſible, I ſay, that *theſe* ſhould be the *affections*, the *longings* and *earnings* of the ſoul; and yet that the *good* man, the *perfect* man, who often *enters* into his *cloſet*, and *communes* with his own *heart*, ſhould be *ignorant* of them? It *cannot* be. In a *word*, can the reluctances of the *body*, and the allurements of the *world*, be diſarmed, weakened, and reduced? Can the hunger and thirſt after *righteouſneſs* be very eager, the reliſh of *ſpiritual* pleaſure briſk and delightful, and the contempt of *worldly* things be really and thoroughly ſettled, and yet the man be *inſenſible* of all this? It *cannot* be. But if we feel *theſe* affections in us, we may ſafely conclude, that we *are partakers of the Divine Nature*; that *we have eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt*; and that *the new creature* is at leaſt *growing* up into a *perfect man, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. Thirdly*, The ſureſt *teſt* of a ſtate of grace, is our *abounding* in *good works: you ſhall know the tree by its fruit*, is our *Maſter*'s own rule, and it can never deceive us: *He that doth*

righteouſneſs is born of God. If then we be frequent and fervent in our *devotion* towards *God*; if we be modeſt and grateful in the *ſucceſſes*, patient and reſigned, calm and ſerene under the *croſſes* and *troubles* of life; if we be not only *punctual*, but *honourable* in our dealings; if we be *vigorous* and *generous* in the exerciſes of *charity*; if we be not only juſt and true, but meek, gentle and obliging in our *words*; if we retrench not only the *ſinful*, but *ſomething* from the *innocent* liberties and gratifications of *ſenſe*, to give our ſelves more *intirely* up to the duties and pleaſures of *faith*: if finally, we never be aſhamed of virtue, nor flatter, compliment, nor wink at vice; if we be ready to meet with *death* with comfort, and retain *life* with ſome degree of indifference: if *theſe* things, I ſay, be in us, we have *little* reaſon to *doubt* of the *goodneſs* of our *ſtate*: for *good works* being the natural fruit of *grace*, it is impoſſible we ſhould abound in the *one* without being poſſeſſed with the *other.* One would think now, that there ſhould be nothing further needful to eſtabliſh the *conſolation* of a *Chriſtian*; and yet *God*, out of regard, no doubt, to the vaſt *importance* and happy *influence* of *aſſurance*, has furniſhed us with *another* ground of it, which is,

The

The 3*d* and *laſt*, namely, the teſtimony of the *Spirit*. This Spirit, as it *aſſiſts* us in our *examination*, ſo it *ratifies* and *confirms* our ſentence by its *ſuffrage*, *fortifying* our *aſſurance*, and *increaſing* our *joy*. All this the *ſcripture* expreſly teaches us; for the Spirit is called, *The earneſt of our inheritance, the ſeal of our redemption*, Eph. i. 13, 14. Eph. iv. 30, 31. 2 Cor. ii. 10. 2 Cor. v. And tho' it be not improbable, but that theſe, and ſuch like places, may relate more *immediately* to the *ſpirit* of *promiſe* which was conſpicuous in *miracles*, and ſeems to have accompanied *all* that believed in the *infancy* of the *Church*, according to thoſe words of our Saviour, *And theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe; in my name they ſhall caſt out devils*, &c. *Mark* xvi. 17. Yet there are texts enough which aſſure us, that the Spirit of God ſhould be imparted to believers through all ſucceeding ages, and that this ſhould be one effect of it to comfort us, and be a pledge to us of the divine favour: thus, Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghoſt.* And Rom. viii. 15, 16. *For ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father; the Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we*

are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If it be here demanded *what* this *testimony of* the *Spirit* is: I answer, 'tis a powerful *energy* of *the* blessed Spirit, *shedding abroad* and increasing *the love of God in our hearts*, Rom v. *Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. This is* the *spirit* of *adoption*, the spirit of *obsignation*, the spirit of *glory*, and the spirit of *love*; happy is he who is partaker of it, he has attained the maturity of *Perfection* and *pleasure*. I can scarce forbear going in with some of the *fathers*, who thought that such as these could never finally fall. I can scarce forbear applying to such, those words, *Rev.* xx. 6. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.* Thus far I have considered *assurance* as it relates to the *present* time. But,

2. *Assurance* may regard the *time to come*; and it conduces very little less to the *peace* and *pleasure* of a *Christian* to be *assured* that he shall *persevere* in a good state, than that he is *now* in *one*. Let us therefore in the *next* place examine what *grounds* the *perfect* man may have for such a persuasion: Now these are likewise *three*.

First,

First, The *propension* and *favour* of *God* for the *perfect* man.
Secondly, The *sufficiency* of divine *assistance*. And,
Thirdly, The *conscience* of his own *integrity*.

1. The *favour* of *God*. I need not go about to prove that *God* will be ever ready to *assist* the *perfect* man; I need not prove that *his eyes are always upon the righteous, and that his ears are always open to their prayers*; that *they* are the dear objects of his *delight* and *love*: *reason* and *scripture* both do abundantly *attest* this, and the repeated *promises* of *God* to *good* men, encourage them to *hope* from God whatever beloved *children* may from a tender and kind *father*. Is not *this* enough then to inspire the *perfect* man with great and confident *hopes*? He knows, not only, that *God* is an *immutable God*, free from all levity and inconstancy; and therefore, that nothing less than presumption and obstinacy, habitual neglect or wickedness, can tempt him to recall his gifts, or repent him of his favours: he knows not only that God is *faithful, and will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able*; but he knows also, that he has a powerful *Intercessor* at the *right-hand* of *God*, an *Advocate with the Father*, who cannot but

prevail. Nor is this all yet; he has a great *many* things that *plead* for him with *God:* there are his *tears* which are *bottled* up; there are his *prayers* and *alms* which are gone up for a *memorial* before God; there is a *book of remembrance* written, wherein all his pious diſcourſes are regiſtred; and God is faithful, and cannot forget his *works* and *labour of love.* The *Spirit* of *God* will not ſoon *quit* the *boſom* that it ſo long *reſided* in; it will not ſuffer itſelf to be *divided* from that perſon, with whom it had entred into ſo cloſe an *union*, that it ſeemed as it were inanimated or incorporated with him, and become eſſential to his Being: whence it is that the *ſpirit* is ſaid *to be grieved* when he is forced and compelled to retire.

2. The *ſecond* ground of *aſſurance* for the *time to come*, is the *ſufficiency* of *divine aſſiſtance.* The good man is well *aſſured*, that God will never refuſe the protection of his *Providence*, or the aid of his *Spirit:* and *what* can be too *difficult* for *ſuch a one? Providence* can prevent a temptation, or remove it; the *Spirit* can ſupport him under it, and enable him to vanquiſh it; nay, it can enable him to extract new *ſtrength* and *vigour* from it; *my grace is ſufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. the truth of which aſſertion has been illuſtriouſly proved by the victories of *martyrs* and *confeſſors*, who

triumph-

triumphed over the united force of *men* and *devils*. Tho' then the *conſcience* of human *frailty* may awaken in the beſt of men *fear* and *caution*, the *aſſurance* of *divine aſſiſtance* cannot but beget in them an holy *confidence*; the ſnares and temptations of the *world*, the ſubtilty and vigilance of the *devil* may juſtly create a *ſollicitude* in the beſt of men; but when they conſider themſelves encompaſſed with the *divine favour*, they can have no reaſon to *deſpond*.

3. The *conſcience* of his own *integrity* is a *third* ground of a good man's *confidence*; he knows that nothing but *crying* provocations can *quench* the ſpirit, and oblige *God* to *deſert* him; and he has reaſon to hope, that *this* is that he *cannot* be *guilty* of. He is ſure, that *preſumptuous* wickedneſs is not only repugnant to his *principles*; but to the very bent of his *nature*, to all the *inclinations* and *paſſions* of his ſoul: I ſpeak here of the *perfect* man; can *he* ever wilfully diſhonour and diſobey *God*, who loves him above all things, and has done ſo *long?* Can he forſake, and betray his *Saviour*, who has long rejoiced and gloried in him; who has been long accuſtomed to look upon all the glories and ſatisfactions of this life, as dung and droſs in compariſon of him? Can *he*, in one word, ever be ſeduced to renounce and hate *religion*, who

who has had so long an *experience* of the beauty, and of the pleasure of it? *Good habits*, when they are grown up to *perfection* and *maturity*, seem to me as *natural* as 'tis possible *evil* ones should be: and if so, 'tis no less difficult to extirpate the *one* than the *other*. And I think I have the *scripture* on my side in this opinion: Does the *prophet Jeremy* demand, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well*, Jer. xiii. 23. St. *John* on the other hand does affirm, *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*, 1 John iii. 9. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not*, v. 6. *These* are the grounds of *assurance* with respect of the *time to come*. As to personal and peremptory *predestination* to life and glory, 'tis at least a *controverted* point, and therefore *unfit* to be laid as the *foundation* of *assurance*. But suppose it were granted, I see not which way it can affect our present enquiry, since the wisest amongst those who stickle *for it*, *advise all to govern* themselves by the *general* promises and threats of the *gospel*; to look upon the fruits of *righteousness* as the only solid *proof* of a *state* of *grace*; and if they be under the dominion of any *sin*, not to presume upon personal *election*, but to look

look upon themſelves as in a ſtate of *damnation*, till they be recovered out of it by *repentance*. Thus far all ſides agree; and this I think is abundantly enough; for here we have room enough for *joy* and *peace*, and for *caution* too; room enough for *confidence*, and for *watchfulneſs* too: the *Romaniſts* indeed, will not allow us to be certain of ſalvation, *certitudine fidei cui non poteſt ſubeſſe falſum*, with ſuch a *certainty* as that with which we entertain an article of *faith*, in which there is no room for *error*; *i. e.* we are not ſo *ſure* that we are in the *favour* of *God*, as we are, or may be, that there *is a God*: We are not ſo *ſure*, that we have a title to the *merits* of *Chriſt*, as we are, or may be, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*. Now if this aſſertion be confined to that *aſſurance* which regards the *time to come*, as it generally is; and do not deny *aſſurance* in *general*, but only certain *degrees* or *meaſures* of it; then there is nothing very *abſurd* or *intolerable* in it. For a *leſs aſſurance* than that which this doctrine excludes, will be *ſufficient* to ſecure the *pleaſure* and *tranquillity* of the *perfect* man. But if this aſſertion be deſigned againſt *that* aſſurance which regards our *preſent* ſtate; *then* I think it is not *ſound*, nor agreeable, either to *reaſon*, *ſcripture*, or *experience*. For *firſt*, the queſtion being about a matter

of

of *fact*, 'tis in vain to argue *that cannot* be, which does appear manifeſtly to *have been:* and certainly they who rejoiced in *Chriſt* with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*, were as fully *perſwaded*, that they were in a ſtate of *grace* and *ſalvation*, as they were that *Jeſus* was *riſen* from the dead. *Secondly*, 'tis *one* thing to balance the *ſtrength* and *degrees* of *aſſurance*; another to balance the *reaſons* of it. For it is very poſſible that *aſſurance* may be ſtronger, where the *reaſon* of it may not be ſo clear and evident as where the *aſſurance* is leſs. Thus for *example*; the evidence of *ſenſe* ſeems to moſt learned men to be ſtronger than that of *faith:* and yet through the aſſiſtance of the *ſpirit*, a man may embrace a truth that depends upon *revelation*, with as much *confidence* and *certainty* as one depending upon *ſenſe*. And ſo it may be in the caſe of *aſſurance:* the *Spirit* of God may by its concurrence raiſe our *aſſurance* as high as he pleaſes; although the *reaſon* on which it be built, ſhould not be *divine* and *infallible*, but merely *moral*, and ſubject at leaſt to a *poſſibility* of error. But *thirdly*, why ſhould not the *certainty* I have concerning my *preſent ſtate*, be as divine and infallible, as that I have concerning an *article* of *faith?* if the *premiſes* be infallible, why ſhould not the *concluſion?* he that *believes*

and

and repents is in a ſtate of grace, is a divine and infallible propoſition: and why may not this other, *I believe and repent*, be equally infallible, though not equally divine? *what* faith and repentance is, is *revealed*; and therefore there is no room for my being here *miſtaken*: beſides, I am *aſſiſted* and *guided* in the trial of myſelf by the *Spirit* of *God*. So that the truth of this propoſition, *I believe and repent*, depends *partly* upon the evidence of *ſenſe*; and I may be as *ſure* of it, as of what I *do* or leave *undone*: *partly* upon the evidence of *inward ſenſation*, or my *conſciouſneſs* of my own thoughts; and I may be as ſure of it as I can be of what *I love* or *hate*, *rejoice* or *grieve* for: and laſtly, it depends upon the evidence of the *Spirit* of *God*, which *aſſiſts* me in the *examination* of myſelf according to thoſe characters of faith and repentance, which he hath himſelf revealed. And when I *conclude* from the two former propoſitions, that *I am in a ſtate of grace*, *he* confirms and ratifies my *inference*. And now, let any one tell me, what kind of *certainty* that is, that can be greater than *this?* I have taken this pains to ſet the doctrine of *aſſurance* in a clear light, becauſe it is the great ſpring of the *perfect* man's *comfort* and *pleaſure*, and ſource of his *ſtrength* and *joy*. And this puts me in mind of that

other

other fruit of *Perfection*, which in the beginning of this *chapter* I promiſed to inſiſt on, which is,

Its ſubſerviency to our happineſs in this life.

That *happineſs* increaſes in proportion with *Perfection*, cannot be denied; unleſs we will at the ſame time deny the happineſs of a man, to exceed *that* of an infant, or the happineſs of an angel *that* of man. Now *this* truth being of a very great *importance*, and ſerving ſingly inſtead of a thouſand *motives* to *Perfection*, I will conſider it impartially, and as cloſely as I can. *Happineſs* and *pleaſure*, are generally thought to be only two words for the ſame thing: not is this very remote from truth; for let but *pleaſure* be ſolid and laſting, and I cannot ſee what more is wanting to make man *happy*. The beſt way therefore to determine how much *Perfection* contributes to our *happineſs*, is to examine how much it contributes to our *pleaſure*.

If, with the *Epicurean*, we think *indolence* our ſupreme *happineſs*, and define *pleaſure* by the *abſence of pain*; then I am ſure the *perfect* man will have the beſt claim to it. *He* ſurely is freeſt from the miſtakes and errors, from the paſſions and follies,

follies, that embroil human life: he creates no evil to himself, nor provokes any unneceſſary danger. His *virtue* effectually *does that*, which *atheiſm* attempts in vain; diſpels the terror of an inviſible power: he needs not drown the voice of conſcience by wine, or noiſe, or the toil of life; it ſpeaks nothing to him, but what is kind and obliging; it is his comforter, not his perſecutor: and as to this world, he reaps that ſatisfaction and tranquillity from the *moderation* of his affections, which *ambition* and *avarice* do in vain promiſe themſelves from *preferments*, or the *increaſe* of *wealth*. If therefore there were *any* ſtate on this ſide heaven exempt from *evil*, it muſt be *that* of the *perfect* man. But he knows the world too well to flatter himſelf with the expectation of *indolence*, or an *undiſturbed tranquillity* here *below*; and is as far from being *deluded* by vain *hopes*, as from being ſcared by vain *fears*, or tortur'd and diſtended by vain *deſires*. He *knows* the world has its *evils*, and that they cannot wholly be *avoided*; he *knows* it, and dares *behold* them with open eyes, *ſurvey* their force, and *feel* and *try* their edge. And then, when he has collected his *own* ſtrength, and called in the *aid* of heaven, he *ſhrinks* not, nor *deſponds*; but *meets* evil with that *courage*, and *bears* it with that *evenneſs* of mind, that *he* ſeems, even in his

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affliction, nearer to *indolence*, than the *fool* and *ſinner* in his *proſperity*. So that I cannot forbear profeſſing, there appears ſo much *beauty*, ſo much *lovelineſs* in the deportment of the *perfect* man, with reſpect to the *evils* of *life*, that for *that* reaſon alone, were there no *other*, I ſhould admire and prefer his *virtue* above any *poſſeſſion* or *enjoyment* of life. Give me leave to *compare* the ſaint and ſinner on this occaſion; and but very briefly: *The wiſe man's eyes*, ſaith *Solomon*, Eccleſ. ii. 14. *are in his head*; *but the fool walketh in darkneſs*. The wiſe man ſees that he has enemies, I mean evils; and therefore he informs himſelf well of their ſtrength, obſerves their motion, and prepares for the encounter: but ignorance and ſtupidity is the greateſt bleſſing of the ſinner's life; and his moſt admired quality is not to be apprehenſive of evil, till it cruſh him with its weight. But if the ſinner be not *fool* enough to arrive at this degree of *brutality*; then as ſoon as the report of the moſt diſtant evil, or the moſt inconſiderable, reaches his ear, *how* it fills his imagination, how it ſhakes his heart, and how it embitters his pleaſures! and to what poor and deſpicable arts, to what baſe and diſhonourable ſhifts does his *fear* force him? when on the ſame occaſion we diſcover nothing in the *perfect* man, but a beautiful mixture of humi-

humility and faith, devotion and confidence or aſſurance in God; *He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord,* Pſal. cxii. a frame of ſpirit, which, to thoſe who have opportunity and ſenſe to obſerve it, renders him both more *beloved* and *revered. Laſtly,* If we conſider the *wicked* and the *good* man, actually under the weight and preſſure of *evil,* how much *unlike* is the ſtate of the *one* in reality to *that* of the *other,* even while the *outward* circumſtances are the ſame? what chearfulneſs, what courage, what reſignation, what hopes adorn the *one!* what inſtruction to all, what ſatisfaction to his friends and relations does his deportment afford! and how does it inſpire and warm the breaſts of thoſe that converſe with him, with an eſteem for, and love of *goodneſs,* and *himſelf!* what charm, what delight is there in thoſe gracious ſpeeches, that proceed at this time out of a good man's mouth! *I know that my Redeemer liveth: the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and bleſſed be the name of the Lord: thou of very faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be afflicted: God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever:* and ſuch like. And how often does he pour out his heart in ſecret before God! how often does he reflect on the gracious and wiſe ends of divine chaſtiſement! and

how often does he, with desire and thirst, meditate on that fulness of joy which expects him in the presence of God! but let us cast our eye now on the *voluptuary*, on the *ambitious*, on the *covetous*, or any *other* sort of *sinner*, under disgrace, poverty, sickness, or any such calamity; what a mean and despicable figure does such a one make! what impatience, what despondency, what guilt, what pusillanimity does every *word*, every *action* betray! or it may be, his insolence is turned into crouching and fawning; his rudeness and violence, into artifice and cunning; and his irreligion, into superstition. Various indeed are the *humours*, and very different the *carriage* of these unhappy men in the day of *tryal*; but all is but *misery* in a *different* dress; *guilt* and *baseness* under a *different* appearance. Here I might further remark, that *that* faith which produces *patience* in *adversity*, produces likewise *security* and *confidence* in *prosperity*. *I will lay me down* (may every good man say in the words of the *Psalmist*) *and sleep, and rise again, for thou, Lord, shalt make me dwell in safety*. And surely the *one* is as serviceable to the ease of human life as the *other*. But I think I have said enough to shew, that if *pleasure* be supposed to imply no more than *indolence*, the *perfect* man has without controversy a far *greater* share

ſhare of it than any *other* can pretend to.

But let us take *pleaſure* to be, not a mere *calm*, but a gentle *breeze*; not to conſiſt in mere *reſt* and *quiet*, but a delightful *motion*; not in the mere *tranquillity* of the mind, but in the *tranſport* of it, or ſomething *nearly* approaching it. *Perfection*, I am confident, will ſuffer nothing by this change of the notion of *pleaſure*. How many *pleaſures* has the *wiſe* man, which depend not on *fortune*, but *himſelf*, (I mean his diligence and integrity) and to which the *ſinner* is an utter *ſtranger!* what pleaſure, what triumph is equal to that of the *perfect* man, when he *glories* in *God*, and makes his *boaſt* of him all day long? when he *rejoyces* in the Lord with joy *unſpeakable and full of glory?* when being *filled* with all the *fulneſs* of *God*, *tranſported* by a vital ſenſe of *divine* love, and *ſtrengthened* and *exalted* by the mighty energy of the *ſpirit* of *adoption*, he maintains a *fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus?* All communion with God, conſiſts in this joy of *love* and *aſſurance*, and has a taſte of *heaven* in it. Let the moſt *fortunate*, and the *wiſeſt Epicurean* too, ranſack all the ſtore-houſes and treaſures of *nature*; let him muſter together all his legions of *pleaſure*, and let him, if he can, conſolidate and incorporate them all; and after

all, being put into the ſcale againſt *this* alone, they will prove lighter than vanity itſelf. To be the care, the delight, the love of an *Almighty God*, to be dear to *him* who is the *origin* and *fountain* of all *Perfections*; Lord, what reſt, what confidence, what joy, what extaſy, do theſe thoughts breed! how ſublime, how lofty, how delightful and raviſhing are thoſe expreſſions of St. *John!* 1 Epiſt. iii. 1, 2. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, becauſe it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* And thoſe again of the *Pſalmiſt, I am continually with thee; thou doſt hold me by my right hand: thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterwards receive me into glory*, Pſal. lxxiii. 23, 24. But I will deſcend to *cooler* and *humbler* pleaſures. It is no ſmall happineſs to the *perfect* man, that he is *himſelf* a proper object of his own *complacency*. He can reflect on the truth and juſtice, the courage and conſtancy, the meekneſs and charity of his ſoul, with much *gratitude* towards *God*, and *contentment* in *himſelf*. And *this* ſurely he may do with good *reaſon*: For the *Perfections* of the *mind* are as juſtly to

to be preferred before thoſe of the *body*, as thoſe of the *body* before the gifts of *fortune*. Nor is it a matter of *ſmall* importance to be *pleaſed* with one's *ſelf*: for grant any one but *this*, and he can never be very *uneaſy*, or very *miſerable*. But *without* this there are very few things which will not diſturb and diſcompoſe; and the moſt obliging accidents of life will have no reliſh in them. 'Tis true, *folly* and *vanity* does ſometimes create a *ſelf-complacency* in the ſinner; why, even *then*, 'tis a *pleaſing error*. But there is as much difference between the *juſt* and *rational* complacency of a *wiſe* man in himſelf, and the *miſtaken* one of a *fool*, as there is between the falſe and fleeting fancies of a dream, and the ſolid ſatisfactions of the day. This will be very manifeſt upon the *ſlighteſt* view we can take of *thoſe* actions, which are the true *reaſon* of the good man's *ſatisfaction* in himſelf, and render his conſcience a continual *feaſt* to him.

It is commonly ſaid, that *virtue* is its *own* reward: and though it muſt be acknowledged, this is a *reward* which is not ſufficient in *all* caſes, nor great enough to vanquiſh *ſome* ſorts of *temptations*; yet there is a great deal of *truth* and *weight* in this ſaying. For a ſtate of virtue is like a ſtate of health or peace, of ſtrength and beauty; and therefore deſirable on its *own*

account. And if *pleaſure*, properly ſpeaking, be nothing elſe but the *agreeable exerciſe of the powers of nature about their proper objects*; and if it be *then* abſolute and compleat, when theſe *powers* are *raiſed*, and the *exerciſe* of them is *free* and *undiſturbed*, then certainly *virtue*, which is nothing elſe but the *perfect* action of a *perfect* nature, as far as the *one* and the *other* may be admitted in this ſtate of *mortality*, muſt be a very conſiderable *pleaſure*. Acts of wiſdom and charity, the contemplation of truth, and the love of goodneſs, muſt be the moſt *natural* and *delightful* exerciſe of the *mind* of man: and becauſe *truth* and *goodneſs* are *infinite* and *omnipreſent*, and nothing can hinder the *perfect* man from *contemplating* the one, and *loving* the other; therefore does he in his degree and meaſure participate of his *ſelf-ſufficiency*, as he does of *other* Perfections of *God*; and enjoys within *himſelf* an inexhauſtible ſpring of *delight*. How many, how various are the exerciſes and employments of the mind of man! and when it is once poliſhed and cultivated, how agreeable are they all! to invent and find out, to illuſtrate and adorn, to prove and demonſtrate, to weigh, diſcriminate and diſtinguiſh, to deliberate calmly and impartially, to act with an abſolute liberty, to deſpiſe little things, and look boldly on dangers; to do all things

things dexterously, to converse with a *sweet* and yet a *manly* air, in *honest* and *open*, yet *taking*, *obliging* language! how delightful are these things in themselves! how much do they conduce to the service, the beauty, and dignity of human life! to these *accomplished* minds we owe histories, sciences, arts, trades, laws. From all which, if *others* reap an unspeakable *pleasure*, how much more the *authors*, the *parents* of them? And all this puts me in mind of *one* great *advantage* which the *perfect* man enjoys above the most *fortunate* sensualists; which is, that he can never want an *opportunity* to employ all the *vigour* of his mind, *usefully* and *delightfully*. Whence it is, that *retirement*, which is the *prison* and the *punishment* of the *fool*, is the *paradise* of the *wise* and *good*.

But let us come at length to *that* pleasure which depends upon *external* objects; where, if any-where, the *fool* and *sinner* must dispute his title to *pleasure* with the *wise* and *good*. How many things are there here which force us to give the preference to the *wise* man? I will not urge, that a *narrow*, a *private* fortune can furnish store *enough* for all the *appetites* of *virtue*; that a *wise* man need not at any time purchase his *pleasure* at too *dear* a rate; he need not lie, nor cheat, nor crouch, nor fawn: *this* is the price of *sinful* pleasure. I will not, I

ſay, urge *theſe* and the *like* advantages, ſince the world thinks it want of *ſpirit* to be *content* with a *little*; and want of *wit* not to practiſe thoſe *arts*, let them be never ſo *baſe*, by which we may compaſs *more*. I'll only remark theſe few things. *Firſt*, the *wiſe* man's *proſpect* is enlarged. He is like an artiſt or philoſopher, which diſcovers a *thouſand* pleaſures and beauties in a *piece*, wherein the *ideot* can ſee *none*: he ſees in all the works, in all the providences of *God*, thoſe *depths*, thoſe *contrivances*, which the *fool* cannot *fathom*; that *order*, that *harmony*, which the *ſinner* is *inſenſible* of. *Next*, The pleaſure of *ſenſe*, that is not refined by *virtue*, leaves a *ſtain* upon the mind: 'tis *coarſe* and *turbulent*, *empty* and *vexatious*. The pleaſure of *virtue* is like a *ſtream*, which runs indeed *within* its banks, but it runs *ſmooth* and *clear*; and has a *ſpring* that always *feeds* the current: but the pleaſure of *ſin* is like a *land-flood*, impetuous, muddy, and irregular: and as ſoon as it *forſakes* the ground it overflows, it leaves nothing behind it, but *ſlime* and *filth*. Laſtly, The *wiſe* man forming a true *eſtimate* of the objects of *ſenſe*, and not looking upon them as his *ultimate* end, *enjoys* all that is in them, and is not fooled by an *expectation* of more. Thus having conſidered the *objects* of human *pleaſure*, *two* things are plain: *Firſt*, That the *perfect* man has *many* ſources or fountains

fountains of *pleaſure*, which the *ſinner* never taſtes of, which he cannot reliſh, which he is a ſtranger to; *Next*, As to *outward* things, that *he* has even here, many advantages above the *other*. But what is more *conſiderable* yet, is,

All the claim the *ſinner* lays to *pleaſure*, is confined to the *preſent* moment, which is extremely *ſhort*, and extremely *uncertain*; the *time* that is *paſt* and to *come*, he *quits* all pretenſions to, or *ought* to do ſo. As to the time *paſt*, the thing is *ſelf-evident*: for the *ſinner*, looking back, ſees his *pleaſures* and *ſatisfactions*; the *good man* his *trials* and *temptations* paſt and gone: the *ſinner* ſees an *end* of his *beauty* and his *ſtrength*; the *good man* of his *weakneſſes* and *follies*: the *one* when he looks back is encountered with *ſin* and *folly*, *wickedneſs* and *ſhame*; the *other* with *repentance* and *good works*: *guilt* and *fear* haunt the reflections of the *one*, *peace* and *hope* attend thoſe of the *other*. As to the *time to come*, the *atheiſt* hath *no* proſpect at all *beyond* the *grave*, the *wicked* Chriſtian a very *diſmal* one, the *weak* and *imperfect* a *doubtful* one; only the *wiſe* and *perfect* an *aſſured*, *joyful*, and *delightful* one. And this puts me in mind of *that* which is the proper *fruit* of *Perfection*, and the trueſt and greateſt *pleaſure* of human *life*, that is, *aſſurance*, aſſurance of the

the *pardon* of *ſin*, aſſurance of the *divine favour*, aſſurance of *immortality* and *glory*.

Need I prove, that *aſſurance* is an unſpeakable *pleaſure*? One would think, that to man, who is daily engaged in a *conflict* with ſome *evil* or other, it were ſuperfluous to prove that it is a mighty *pleaſure* to be raiſed, tho' *not* above the *aſſault*, tho' not above the *reach*, yet above the *venom* and *malignity* of *evils*: to be *filled* with joy, and ſtrength, and confidence; to ride *triumphant* under the protection of the *divine favour*, and ſee the ſea of life, ſwell and toſs itſelf in vain, *in vain threaten* the bark it *cannot ſink*, *in vain invade* the cable it *cannot burſt*. One would think, that to man, who lives all his life long in *bondage* for fear of *death*, it ſhould be a ſurprizing *delight* to ſee *death* lie *gaſping* at his feet, naked and impotent, without *ſting*, without *terror*: one would, finally, think, that to man, who lives rather by *hope* than *enjoyment*, it ſhould not be neceſſary to prove, that the *Chriſtian's hope*, whoſe confidence is greater, its objects more glorious, and its ſucceſs more certain than *that* of any worldly fancy or project, is full of *pleaſure*; and that it is a *delightful* proſpect to ſee the *heavens* opened, and *Jeſus*, our *Jeſus*, our *Prince* and *Saviour*, ſitting at the *right* hand of *God*.

Thus

Thus I have, I think, ſufficiently made out the ſubſerviency of *Perfection* to the *happineſs* of this *preſent* life, which was the thing propoſed to be done in this *chapter*. Nor can I imagine what *objections* can be ſprung to invalidate what I have ſaid; unleſs there be any thing of colour in theſe *two*.

1. To reap the *pleaſure*, will ſome one ſay, which you have deſcribed here, it requires ſomething of an *exalted* genius, ſome *compaſs* of underſtanding, ſome *ſagacity* and *penetration*. To this I *anſwer*, I *grant* indeed that ſome of thoſe *pleaſures* which I have reckoned up as belonging to the *perfect* man, demand a ſpirit *raiſed* a little above the *vulgar*: but the *richeſt* pleaſures, *not* the moſt *poliſhed* and *elevated* ſpirits, but the moſt *devout* and *charitable* ſouls are *beſt* capable of. *Such* are the *peace* and *tranquillity* which ariſes from the *conqueſt* and *reduction* of all inordinate affections: the *ſatisfaction* which accompanies a ſincere and vigorous *diſcharge* of *duty*, and our *reflections* upon it; the *ſecurity* and *reſt* which flows from *ſelf-reſignation*, and *confidence* in the *divine* protection: and laſtly, the *joy* that ſprings from the *full* aſſurance of *hope*.

But 2*dly*, It may be objected, 'tis true all theſe things ſeem to hang together well enough in *ſpeculation*; but when we come

to

to examine the matter of *fact*, we are almoſt tempted to think, that all which you have ſaid to prove *the ways of wiſdom, ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace*, amounts to no more than a pretty *amuſement* of the mind, and a *viſionary* ſcheme of happineſs. For how *few* are there, if *any*, who *feel* all this to be truth, and *experiment* the *pleaſure* you talk of? How *few* are they in whom we can diſcover any ſigns of this ſpiritual *joy*, or *fruits* of a divine *tranquillity* or *ſecurity?* I *anſwer*, in a word, the examples of a *perfect* and *mature* virtue are very *few*; *religion* runs very *low*, and the *love* of *God* and *goodneſs* in the boſoms of *moſt Chriſtians* ſuffers ſuch an *allay* and *mixture*, that it is *no* wonder at all, if ſo *imperfect* a *ſtate* breed but very *weak* and *imperfect hopes*, very *faint* and *doubtful joys*. But I ſhall have occaſion to *examine* the force of this *objection* more *fully*, when I come to the *obſtacles* of *Perfection*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the attainment of Perfection: with a particular account of the manner, or the ſeveral ſteps, by which man advances or grows up to it: with three remarks *to make this diſcourſe more uſeful, and to free it from ſome ſcruples.*

I Have in the *firſt*, *ſecond*, and *third* chapters explained the *notion* of *Religious Perfection.* In the *fourth* chapter I have inſiſted on *two effects* of it, *aſſurance* and *pleaſure:* my method therefore now leads me to the *attainment* of *Perfection.* Here I will do *two* things. *1ſt*, I will trace out the ſeveral *ſteps* and *advances* of the Chriſtian towards it, and draw up, as it were, a ſhort hiſtory of his ſpiritual *progreſs*, from the very infancy of virtue to its maturity and manhood. *2dly*, I will diſcourſe briefly of the *motives* and *means* of *Perfection.*

Of the Chriſtian's progreſs *towards* Perfection.

Many are the figures and metaphors by which the ſcripture deſcribes this; alluding *one* while to the formation, nouriſhment, and growth of the natural man; *another* while to that of plants and vegetables: *one* while

while to the dawning and increaſing light, that ſhines more and more to the perfect day. *Another* while to that ſucceſſion of labours and expectations which the husbandman runs thro' from ploughing to the harveſt. But of all the ſimilies which the ſpirit makes uſe of to this end, there is *one* eſpecially that ſeems to me to give us the trueſt, and the livelieſt image of the change of a ſinner into a ſaint. The ſcripture repreſents *ſin* as a ſtate of *bondage*, and *righteouſneſs* as a ſtate of *liberty*; and teaches us, that by the ſame ſteps by which an enſlaved and oppreſſed people arrive at their ſecular, by the very ſame does the Chriſtian at his ſpiritual liberty and happineſs.

Firſt then, as ſoon as any judgment or mercy, or any other ſort of call, awakens and penetrates the ſinner; as ſoon as a clear light breaks in upon him, and makes him ſee and conſider his own ſtate, he is preſently agitated by various paſſions, according to his different guilt and temper, or the different calls and motives by which he is wrought upon: one while fear, another while ſhame; one while indignation, another while hope, fills his ſoul: he reſents the tyranny, and complains of the perſecution of his luſts; he upbraids himſelf with his folly, and diſcovers a meanneſs and ſhameſulneſs in his vices, which he did

not

not reflect on ſufficiently before; he is vexed and troubled at the plagues and miſchiefs his ſin and folly have already procured him, and thinks he has reaſon to fear, if he perſiſt, others far more intolerable. *Then* he calls to mind the goodneſs, the long-ſuffering of *God*, the love of *Jeſus*, the *demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power*; and how diſtant ſoever he be from virtue, he diſcerns there is a beauty and pleaſure in it; and cannot but judge the righteous happy. *Theſe* thoughts, theſe travels of the mind, if they be not ſtrangled in the birth by a man's own wilfulneſs or puſillanimity, or unhappily diverted upon ſome temptations, do kindle in the boſom of the ſinner, the deſires of righteouſneſs and *liberty*; they fill him with regret and ſhame, caſt him down, and humble him before God, and make him finally reſolve on ſhaking off the yoke. This may be called a ſtate of *illumination*; and is a ſtate of *preparation* for, or *diſpoſition* to *repentance*: or, if it be *repentance* itſelf, 'tis yet but an *embryo*: to *perfect* it, 'tis neceſſary,

Secondly, that the ſinner make good his reſolutions, and actually break with his luſts, he muſt reject their ſollicitations, and boldly oppoſe their commands; he muſt take part with reaſon and religion, keep

keep a watch and guard over his ſoul, and muſt earneſtly labour by mortification and diſcipline, by meditation and prayer to root out vice, and plant virtue in his ſoul. This in the language of the prophet is *ceaſing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Iſa. i. 16, 17. He that has proceeded thus far, though he feel a great conflict within; though the oppoſition of luſt be very ſtrong, and conſequently the diſcharge of his duty very difficult, he is nevertheleſs in a ſtate of *grace*, but in a ſtate of *childhood* too; he is *ſincere*, but far from being *perfect*. And yet *this* is the ſtate which many continue in to the end of their lives, being partly abuſed by falſe notions, and taught to believe, from *Rom.* vii, that there is no higher or perfecter ſtate; partly intangled and incumbered by ſome unhappy circumſtances of life: or, it may be, the force or *impetus* of the ſoul towards *Perfection*, is much abated by the ſatisfaction of proſperity, and the many diverſions and engagements of a fortunate life: but he that will be *perfect*, muſt look upon this ſtate as the beginning of virtue. For it muſt be remember'd, that a ſtubborn and powerful enemy will not be ſubdued and totally brought under in a moment. The Chriſtian therefore muſt proſecute this war till he has finiſhed it; I will not ſay by extir-

extirpating, but disabling the enemy. But here I would have it well observed, that the reducing the enemy to a low condition, is not always effected by an uninterrupted series of *victories*; for seldom is any so fortunate, or so brave, so wise, or so watchful, as to meet with no check in the long course of a difficult war; 'tis enough if he be not discouraged, but instructed and awakened by it. And to prevent any fatal disaster, two errors must carefully be avoided. *First*, A hasty and fond confidence in our selves, with an over-weening contempt and neglect of the enemy: and *next*, all false and cowardly projects of truces and accommodations: nor is the sitting down content with poor and low attainments very far removed from this latter. *This* is the *second* stage of the Christian's advance toward *Perfection*; and may be called the state of *liberty*. The *third* and last, which now follows, is the state of *zeal*, or *love*, or, as *mistick* writers delight to call it, the state of *union*.

The yoke of sin being once shaken off, the love of righteousness, and a delight in it, is more and more increased: and *now* the man proceeds to the *last* round in the scale of *Perfection*. The wisdom, courage, and vigour of a convert, is generally at first employed in subduing his corruptions, in conquering his ill habits,

and defeating his enemies; in watching over his own heart, and guarding himself againſt temptations. But this being once done, he is in full *liberty* to purſue the works of peace and love. Now he may advance from *neceſſary* to *voluntary* acts of ſelf-denial, which before would have been *putting new wine into old bottles*, contrary to the advice of our *Maſter*, Mat. ix. 17. Now he may enlarge his knowledge, and exchange the *milk of the word* for *ſtrong meat*, for the wiſdom and the myſteries of it: now he may extend his watchfulneſs, his care; and whereas they were before wiſely, for the moſt part, confined to his own ſafety, he may now, like our Saviour, *go about doing good*, Acts. x. 38. protecting, ſtrengthning, and reſcuing his weak brethren; propagating the faith, and inflaming the boſoms of men with the love of *Jeſus* and his truth. Now, in a word, he may give himſelf up to a life of more exalted contemplation purity and charity, which will be natural and eaſy now, though it were not ſo in the beginning. And this life is accompanied *with peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; with confidence and pleaſure: now the *yoke of Chriſt is eaſy, and his burden light*; now *he rejoices with joy unſpeakable, and hopes full of glory*. Now 'tis not ſo much *he that lives, as Chriſt that lives in him*: For the *life which he now leads*, is intirely

tirely the product of faith and love; and his greateſt buſineſs is to maintain the ground which he has got, and to hold faſt the ſtedfaſtneſs of his hope unto the end.

To render this ſhort account of the growth of virtue, from its very ſeed to maturity, the more *uſeful*, and to free it from ſome *ſcruples*, which it may otherwiſe give occaſion to; I will here add *two* or *three* remarks. 1. That the ſtate and habit of *perfection*, is a different thing from ſome ſudden flights, or efforts of an extraordinary *paſſion*; and ſo is the fixt and eſtabliſhed tranquillity of the mind, from ſome ſudden guſts, and ſhort-liv'd fits of ſpiritual joy. No man attains to the habits of virtue and pleaſure but by degrees; and the natural method and order by which he advances to *either*, is that which I have ſet down. But as to ſome ſallies of the moſt pure and exalted paſſions, as to ſhort-liv'd fits of *perfection*, as to tranſient taſtes, ſhort and ſudden tranſports of ſpiritual pleaſure, it is very often otherwiſe. God ſometimes, either to allure the frailty of a new convert, or to fortify his reſolution againſt ſome hazardous trial, does raiſe him to an extraordinary height, by more than uſual communications of his bleſſed Spirit; and raviſhes him by ſome glances, as it were, of the beatifick viſion.

Raptures of love, the melting tenderneſs of a pious ſorrow, the ſtrength of reſolution and faith, the confidence and exultancy of aſſurance, do ſometimes accompany ſome ſort of Chriſtians in the beginnings of righteouſneſs, or in the ſtate of *illumination*. Where the conviction is full, the imagination lively, and the paſſions tender, it is more eaſy to *gain perfection*, than to *preſerve* it. When a profligate ſinner in the *day of God's power* is ſnatched like a firebrand out of the fire, reſcued by ſome amazing and ſurprizing call, like *Iſrael* by miracles out of *Egypt*; I wonder not, if ſuch a one *loves much*, becauſe *much has been forgiven him*; I wonder not, if he be ſwallowed up by the deepeſt and the livelieſt ſenſe of guilt and mercy; I wonder not, if ſuch a one endeavour to repair his paſt crimes by *heroick* acts, if he make haſte to redeem his loſt time by a zeal and vigilance hard to be imitated, never to be parallel'd by others. Hence we read of *Judah's love in the day of her eſpouſals*, Jer. ii. 2. And of the *firſt love of the church of Epheſus*, Rev. ii. 4. as the moſt perfect. And in the firſt times of the goſpel, when men were converted by aſtoniſhing miracles; when the preſence and example of *Jeſus* and his *followers*; when the perſpicuity and authority, the ſpirit and power, the luſtre and ſurprize of

of the *word* of life and ſalvation dazzled, over-powered and tranſported the minds of men, and made a thorough change in a moment; and when again no man profeſſed Chriſtianity, but he expected by his ſufferings and martyrdom to ſeal the truth of his profeſſion; I wonder not, if virtue ripened faſt under ſuch miraculous influences of heaven; or if *aſſurance* ſprung up in a moment from theſe bright proofs of an unſhaken integrity. But we, who live in colder climates; who behold nothing in ſo clear and bright a light as thoſe happy ſouls did, muſt be content to make ſhorter and ſlower ſteps towards *perfection*, and ſatisfy our ſelves with a natural not miraculous progreſs. And we, whoſe virtues are ſo generally under-grown, and our tryals no other than common ones, have no reaſon to expect the joys of a *perfect aſſurance*, till we go on to *Perfection*.

2*dly*, As *Perfection* is a work of time, ſo is it of great expence and coſt too; I mean, 'tis the effect of much labour and travel, ſelf-denial and watchfulneſs, reſolution and conſtancy. Many are the dangers which we are to encounter thro' our whole progreſs towards it; why elſe are we exhorted, to *learn to do good? To perfect holineſs in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1, 2. *To be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds from day to day*, Eph. iv. 23. *To*

watch, ſtand faſt, to quit us like men, to be ſtrong, 1 Cor xvi. 13. *To take to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; and when we have done all, to ſtand*, Eph. vi. 11, 13. *To uſe all diligence to make our calling and election ſure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. and ſuch like? nay, which is very remarkable, theſe and the like exhortations were addreſſed to *Chriſtians* in *thoſe* times, which had manifold advantages above theſe of *ours*. If I ſhould ſay, that the Spirit of God, the ſanctifying grace of God, was then poured forth in more plentiful meaſure than ever after, not only *ſcripture*, as I think, but *reaſon* too, would be on my ſide. The intereſt of the church of Chriſt required it; ſanctity being as neceſſary as miracles to convert the Jew and the Gentile. But beſides this, the then wonderful and ſurprizing light of the goſpel, the preſence of *Jeſus* in the fleſh, or of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of his glory; a croud of wondrous works and miracles, the expectation of terrible things, temporal and eternal judgments at the door, and an equal expectation of glorious ones too. All theſe things breaking in, beyond expectation, upon a *Jewiſh* and *Pagan* world, overwhelmed before by thick darkneſs, and whoſe abominations were too notorious to be concealed, and too deteſtable

teſtable to be excuſed or defended, could not but produce a very great and ſudden change. Now therefore, if in theſe times many did ſtart forth in a moment fit for *baptiſm* and *martyrdom*; if many amongſt theſe were ſuddenly changed, juſtified and crowned, I wonder not. *This* was a *day of power*, a *day of glory* wherein God aſſerted Himſelf, exalted his Son, and reſcued the world by *a ſtretched-out hand*. I ſhould not therefore from hence be induced to expect any thing like at *this day*. But yet if, notwithſtanding all this, Chriſtians in thoſe happy times, amidſt ſo many advantages, ſtood in *need* of ſuch exhortations, what do not we in theſe times? if ſo much watchfulneſs, prayer, patience, fear, abſtinence, and earneſt contention became them, when God as it were *bowed the heavens, and came down and dwelt amongſt men*; what becomes us in theſe days, in the dregs of time, when God ſtands as it were aloof off, to ſee what will be our latter end, retired behind a cloud, which our hereſies and infidelities, ſchiſms and diviſions, ſins and provocations have raiſed? To conclude, he that will be *perfect* muſt not ſit like the lame man by *Bethesda's* pool, expecting till ſome *angel* come to cure him; but, like our *Lord*, he muſt climb the mount, and pray, and then he may be transformed; he may be raiſed as much

much above the moral corruption of his nature by *Perfection*, as our Saviour was above the meanneſs and humility of his body, by his glorious *Tranſfiguration*. Theſe *two* obſervations are of manifold uſe. For *many* expect pleaſure when they have no right to it; they would reap, before virtue be grown up and ripened; and being more intent upon the fruit of duty, than the diſcharge of it, they are frequently diſappointed and diſcouraged. *Others* there are, who miſtaking ſome fits and flaſhes of ſpiritual joy for the habitual peace and pleaſure of *Perfection*, do entertain too early confidences, and inſtead of *perfecting holineſs in the fear of God*, they decline, or it may be, fall away through negligence and ſecurity; or, which is as bad, the duties of religion grow taſteleſs and inſipid to them for want of that pleaſure which they ignorantly or preſumptuouſly expect ſhould conſtantly attend them: and ſo they are diſheartened or diſguſted, and give back; which they would never do, if they did rightly underſtand, that *Perfection* is a work of time; that a ſettled tranquillity, an habitual joy of ſpirit, is the fruit only of *Perfection*; and that thoſe ſhort gleams of joy, which break in upon new converts, and ſometimes on other imperfect Chriſtians, do depend upon extraordinary circumſtances, or are peculiar favours of heaven,

heaven. *Laſtly*, there are *many*, who have entertained very odd fancies about the *attainment* of *Perfection*; they talk and act as if *Perfection* were the product, not of time and experience, but of an inſtant; as if it were to be infuſed in a moment, not acquired; as if it were a mere arbitrary favour, not the fruit of meditation and diſcipline. 'Tis true, it cannot be doubted by a Chriſtian, but that *Perfection* derives itſelf from heaven; and that the ſeed of it is the grace of God: yet it is true too, and can as little be doubted by any one who conſults the goſpel, and the experience of the beſt men, that we muſt watch, and pray, and contend, labour, and perſevere, and that long too, ere we can attain it. And whoever fancies himſelf rapt up into the *third heaven* on a ſudden, will find himſelf as ſuddenly let down to the *earth* again; if he do not uſe his utmoſt diligence to fortify his reſolutions, to cheriſh the new-born flame, and to guard and improve his virtues.

3*dly*, It may be *objected* againſt the account I have given of the *growth* of virtue, that when I come to the maturity of it, my colours are *too* bright, my ſtrokes *too* bold, and the form I have given it *too* divine. For you deſcribe it, will one ſay, as if man, now grown *perfect*, had nothing to do, but to enjoy God, and himſelf;

ſelf; as if he were already *entered into reſt*, and did actually *ſit down with Chriſt in heavenly places*; as if, in a word, *virtue* were no longer his task, but *pleaſure*; as if he had nothing to do but to rejoice continually, nothing further to preſs after, nothing to combat, nothing to contend with: whereas the *fathers* generally, and all judicious *modern* writers, ſeem to place *Perfection* in nothing higher, than in a perpetual progreſs towards it; they look upon life as a perpetual warfare, and utterly deny any ſuch height or eminence as is raiſed above clouds and ſtorms, above troubles and temptations. But to *this* I have *ſeveral* things to ſay, which will *clear* my ſenſe about this matter, and diſpel all *objections*. *Firſt*, I have deſcribed the laſt ſtage of the Chriſtian's ſpiritual progreſs, which I call a ſtate of zeal, and in which I ſuppoſe the Chriſtian to commence perfect; this, I ſay, I have deſcribed in the ſame manner, and, as near as I could, in the ſame words which the ſcripture does. *Secondly*, I do not pretend any where to aſſert, that there is any ſtate in this life raiſed above trials and temptations. Alas! the moſt *perfect* man will find it work enough to make good the ground he has gained, and maintain the conqueſt he has won; much watchfulneſs and labour, much humility and fear, and many other virtues

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are necessary to perseverance in a state of *Perfection*. *Thirdly*, As the world now goes, and indeed ever did, *Perfection* is a state we arrive at very *late*; and all the way to it full of labour and travel, full of dangers and difficulties; so that upon this account, the life of man may well enough be said to be a perpetual warfare. But, *Fourthly*, I do by no means affirm, that the *perfect* man is incapable of growth and improvement. Of this I shall have occasion to unfold my sense more fully afterwards. In the mean time I cannot forbear observing here, that there is a great difference between the growth of an *imperfect* and a *perfect* Christian; for supposing grace to be always increasing, and the very maturity of virtue to admit of degrees; yet the marks and distinctions of such different degrees are so nice and delicate, that the *advances* of the *perfect* man are scarcely perceptible to himself, without the closest and strictest enquiry, much less can they fall under the observation of others. The *first change* of a sinner from darkness to light, from vice to virtue, from an aversion for God and goodness, to a *sincere*, tho' not a *perfect* love of both, is very palpable: so *again*, the change from a state of weakness and inconstancy, to one of strength; of conflict and difficulty, to one of ease and liberty; of fear and doubt,

doubt, to one of confidence and pleaſure, is little leſs evident than ſenſible. *But* the ſeveral degrees of growth *afterwards*, the improvements, whatever they be, of a mature ſtate, are of *another* nature, not conſiſting in a *change*, but *addition*; and that made *inſenſibly*. Here therefore, the *perfect* man, in order to maintain the peace and pleaſure of his mind, need not enter into a nice and ſcrupulous examination of the degrees and meaſures of his virtues; 'tis ſufficient that he make good his poſt; 'tis enough if he follow the advice of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *If he be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

CHAP. VI.

Of the means *of Perfection. Five general obſervations, ſerving for directions in the uſe of goſpel-means, and* inſtrumental-*duties.* 1. *The practice of* wiſdom *and* virtue, *is the beſt way to improve and ſtrengthen both.* 2. *The two general and immediate inſtruments, as of* converſion, *ſo of* Perfection *too, are the* goſpel *and the* ſpirit. 3 *The natural and immediate fruit of* meditation, prayer, euchariſt, pſalmody, *and good* converſation *or* friendſhip, *is, the quickening and enli-*

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vening the conſcience, *the fortifying and confirming our* reſolutions, *and the raiſing and keeping up an* heavenly frame of ſpirit. 4. *The immediate ends of* diſcipline, *are the ſubduing the* pride *of the heart, and the reducing the* appetites *of the body.* 5. *Some kinds of life are better ſuited to the great ends of religion and virtue, than others.*

SHould I inſiſt particularly on every one of the *means* or *inſtruments* of *Perfection*, it would lead me through the whole ſyſtem of religion; it would oblige me to treat of all the articles of our faith, and all the parts of moral righteouſneſs. For the virtues of the goſpel do all afford mutual ſupport and nouriſhment to one another; and mutually miniſter to their own growth and ſtrength. And *prayer* and the *Lord's ſupper*, not to mention *meditation*, *pſalmody*, *converſation*, *diſcipline*, are founded upon the belief of all the myſteries of our religion; and conſiſt in the exerciſe of almoſt all Chriſtian graces, as repentance, faith, hope, charity: but this would be an endleſs task. I purpoſe therefore here only to lay down ſome few *general obſervations*, which may ſerve for directions in the uſe of *goſpel-means*, point out the *end* we are to aim at, and enable us to reap the utmoſt *benefit* from them.

§. 1.

§. 1. The *practice* of wiſdom and virtue, is the beſt way to improve and ſtrengthen both. This is a propoſition almoſt ſelf-evident: for beſides that it is acknowledged on all hands, that the frequent repetition of ſingle *acts* of virtue, is the natural way to arrive at an *habit* of it; the *practice* of virtue gives a man great boldneſs towards God, mingles joy and pleaſure in all his addreſſes to him, purifies and enlightens the mind, and entitles him to more plentiful meaſures of grace, and higher degrees of favour. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall make you free*, John viii. 31, 32. *To him that hath, ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance*, Matth. xiii. 12. If this be ſo, as undoubtedly it is, it is plain, that we ought not to be fond of ſuch a ſolitude or retirement, as cuts off the opportunity of many virtues, which may be daily practiſed in a more publick and active life. The true *Anchorite*, or *hermite*, was at *firſt* little *better* than a *pious extravagant*: I will not ſay how much *worſe* he is now. Meditation and prayer are excellent duties; but meekneſs and charity, mercy and zeal, are not one jot inferior to them. The *world* is an excellent *ſchool* to a good Chriſtian;

an; the follies and the miſeries, the trials and temptations of it, do not only exerciſe and employ our virtue, but cultivate and improve it: they afford us both *inſtruction* and *diſcipline*, and naturally advance us on towards ſolid wiſdom, and a well-ſettled power over our ſelves. 'Tis our own fault if every accident that befals us, and every one whom we converſe with, do not teach us ſomewhat; occaſion ſome wiſe *Reflection*, or inkindle ſome pious *affection* in us. We do not reflect on our words and actions, we do not obſerve the motions of our own hearts as diligently as we ought; we make little or no application of what we ſee or hear, nor learn any thing from the wiſdom and the virtue, the folly and the madneſs of *man*, and the conſequences of both: and ſo we neither improve our *knowledge*, nor our *virtue*, but are the ſame to *day* we were *yeſterday*, and life *waſtes* away in common accidents, and cuſtomary actions, with as little alteration in us, as in our affairs: whereas, were we mindful, as we ought, of our true intereſt, and deſirous to reap ſome ſpiritual benefit from every thing, the virtues of *good* men would inkindle our emulation, and the folly and madneſs of *ſinners*, would confirm our abhorrence for ſin; from *one* we ſhould learn content, from *another* induſtry; here we

ſhould

ſhould ſee a charm in meekneſs and charity, *there* in humility; in *this* man we ſhould ſee reaſon to admire diſcretion and command of himſelf; in *that* courage and conſtancy, aſſiduity, and perſeverance: nor would it be leſs uſeful to us, to obſerve, how vanity expoſes *one*, and peeviſhneſs torments *another*; how pride and ambition embroil a *third*; and how hateful and contemptible avarice renders a *fourth*; and to trace all that variety of ruin, which luſt and prodigality, diſorder and ſloth, leave behind them.

And as this kind of obſervations will fill us with ſolid and uſeful *knowledge*, ſo will a diligent attention to the rules of righteouſneſs, and diſcretion in all the common and daily actions of life, enrich us with true *virtue*. *Religion* is not to be confined to the *Church*, and to the *cloſet*, nor to be exerciſed only in *prayers* and *ſacraments*, *meditations* and *alms*; but every-where, we are in the preſence of God, and every word, every action, is capable of *morality*. Our defects and infirmities betray themſelves in the daily accidents and the common converſation of life; and *here* they draw after the very important conſequences; and therefore *here* they are to be watched over, regulated and governed, as well as in our more *ſolemn* actions. 'Tis

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to the virtues or the errors of our *common* converſation and *ordinary* deportment, that we owe both our friends and enemies, our good or bad character abroad, our domeſtick peace or troubles; and in a high degree, the improvement or depravation of our minds. Let no man then, that will be *perfect* or *happy*, abandon himſelf to his humours or inclinations in his carriage towards his acquaintance, his children, his ſervants: let no man, that will be *perfect* or *happy*, follow *prejudice* or *faſhion* in the common and cuſtomary actions of life: but let him aſſure himſelf, that by a daily endeavour to conform theſe more and more to the excellent rules of the goſpel, he is to train up himſelf by degrees to the moſt abſolute *wiſdom*, and the moſt *perfect* virtue, he is capable of And to this end he muſt firſt know himſelf, and thoſe he has to do with; he muſt diſcern the proper ſeaſon and the juſt occaſion of every virtue; and then he muſt apply himſelf to the acquiring the perfection of it by the daily exerciſe of it, even in thoſe things, which, for want of due reflection, do not commonly ſeem of any great importance. To one that is *thus* diſpoſed, the dulneſs or the careleſneſs of a ſervant, the ſtubborneſs of a child, the ſourneſs of a parent, the inconſtancy of friends, the coldneſs of relations, the

neglect or ingratitude of the world, will all prove extremely useful and beneficial; every thing will instruct him, every thing will afford an opportunity of exercising some virtue or another; so that such a one shall be *daily* learning, *daily* growing better and wiser.

§. 2. The *two* great *instruments*, not of *regeneration* only, but also of *perseverance* and *Perfection*, are the *Word* and the *Spirit* of *God*. This no man *doubts* that is a Christian: and therefore I will not go about to *prove* it: nor will I at present discourse of the energy and operation of the *one*, and the *other*; or examine what each is in its self, or wherein the one differs from the other. 'Tis abundantly enough, if we be assured that the *gospel* and the *Spirit* are proper and sufficient *means* to attain the great *ends* I have mentioned, namely, our *conversion* and *Perfection*. And that they are so, is very plain from those *texts* which do expressly assert, that the *gospel* contains all those truths that are necessary to the clear exposition of our duty, or to the moving and obliging us to the practice of it. And that the *Spirit* implies a supply of all that supernatural strength, be it what it will, that is necessary to enable us, not only to will, but to do that which the gospel convinces us to be our duty. *Such* are,

are, *Rom.* i. 2. *For the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me free from the law of ſin and death.* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he ſaid unto me, my grace is ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs. Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* 1 Pet. i. 5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time.* 'Tis needleſs to multiply *texts* on this occaſion; otherwiſe it were very eaſy to ſhew, that all things neceſſary to *life and godlineſs*, are contained in the *Word* and *Spirit*; that whatever is neceſſarily to be wrought in us to prepare us for, or entitle us to eternal ſalvation, is aſcribed to the *goſpel* and the *Spirit*. This truth then being unqueſtionable, that the *goſpel* and the *Spirit* are the *two* great *inſtruments* of *Perfection*; we may from hence infer *two rules*, which are of the moſt univerſal uſe, and of the moſt powerful efficacy in the purſuit of *Perfection*. 1. We cannot have too great a value, too great a paſſion for the *Book of God*; nor fix our thoughts and hearts too earneſtly upon the truths of

it. We muſt imitate the *Theſſalonians*, in behalf of whom St. *Paul* thanks God, *becauſe when they received the word of God which they heard of him, they received it not as the word of men; but as it is in truth, the word of God*, 1 Theſſ. ii. 13. that is, we muſt entertain the *goſpel*, as *that* which has infallible truth in all its doctrines, uncontroulable authority in all its precepts, a divine certainty in all its promiſes and threats, and a divine wiſdom in all its counſels and directions: and *he* that thus believes will certainly find the goſpel to work effectually in *him*, as it did in the *Theſſalonians*. What light and beauty will he diſcern in all its deſcriptions of our duty! what force in all its perſuaſions! what majeſty, what dignity, what life, what power, what conſolation, what ſupport! in one word, what heavenly virtue will he diſcern in each part of it, and what vaſt and unfathomable wiſdom in the whole compoſure and contrivance of it! how will he then admire it, how will he love it, how will he ſtudy it, how will he delight in it! how will he be tranſported by the promiſes, and awed by the threats of it! how will he be pierced and ſtruck through by thoſe exaggerations of ſin, and captivated and enamoured by thoſe lively and divine deſcriptions of virtue he meets in it! how will he adore the goodneſs of *God*, conſpi-

conſpicuous in our redemption! how will he be inflamed with the love of *Jeſus*, and be amazed at his condeſcenſion and humility! *this* and much more is the natural effect of our receiving the *goſpel* as we ought, and pondering the truths of it with devout and inceſſant meditation. This the royal *Pſalmiſt* was abundantly ſenſible of, *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee*, Pſal. cxix. 11. *Thou through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more underſtanding than all my teachers: for thy teſtimonies are my meditation*, ver. 98. To which I might add many other *verſes* out of that *Pſalm*, containing the various and mighty *effects* of the *word* of *God*. Nor will any one think that I attribute too much to the ſtudy of this *word of life*, who ſhall conſider that it is one of the great works of the *Holy Spirit*, to *incline our hearts to the teſtimonies of God, to write his laws in our hearts*, to diſpoſe us to attend to revealed truths; and, in one word, to fix our minds and thoughts upon them. 2. Since the *Spirit*, together with the *goſpel*, is a joint principle of *regeneration* and *Perfection*, 'tis manifeſt, that we ought to live in a continual dependance upon God. *He* muſt be our hope and confidence in the *day of trial: He* muſt be our praiſe and

boaſt in the *day of victory*, and in the *day of peace:* when we *lie down*, and when we *riſe up*, we muſt ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *'Tis thou, Lord, that makeſt me dwell in ſafety*, Pſal. iv. 8. We muſt look upon our ſelves as ſurrounded by enemies, and beſieged by *ſpiritual* dangers, as *David* was by *temporal:* and as *he* in the one, ſo muſt we in the *other*, expect ſtrength and ſalvation from *him*. *Through God we ſhall do valiantly, for he it is that ſhall tread down our enemies*, Pſal. lx. 12. *Many nations compaſs me round about; but in the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them.* And when we have conquered temptations, and routed the powers of darkneſs, we muſt aſcribe all, not to our own ſtrength, nor to our own watchfulneſs, but to the grace and the power of God. *If the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide, now may Iſrael ſay; if the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide*, when the legions of hell combined with the world and fleſh againſt us, *they had ſwallowed us up alive*, Pſal. cxxiv. 1, 2, 3. Now, *many* will be the happy *effects* of this dependance upon God; we ſhall be paſſionately deſirous of his preſence, of his grace and favour; we ſhall dreſs and prepare our ſouls, we ſhall awaken and diſpoſe all our faculties to receive him; we ſhall ever do the things that may invite and prevail with him to abide with us; we ſhall be apprehenſive of his

his forſaking *us*, as the greateſt evil that can befal us. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors: and the king of glory ſhall come in:* awake, O my ſoul, raiſe thy ſelf above this world and fleſh, that thou mayeſt be fit for the *king of glory* to dwell in thee: *Who is the king of glory? the Lord ſtrong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battel*; that Holy Spirit that ſubdues our enemies, that ſtrengthens us with might, and fills us with courage and holy alacrity, *Pſal.* xxiv. 7, 8. Nor does the *Pſalmiſt* prepare his ſoul for God by meditation only, and ſpiritual recollection and ſoliloquies; but by a careful and circumſpect regulation of all his actions, *Pſal.* ci. 2, 3. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart. I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me.* And how earneſtly does he pray againſt God's forſaking him? Pſal. li. 11. *Caſt me not away from thy preſence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* The *reſult* of all this, muſt needs be *ſtedfaſtneſs* and *growth* in holineſs and goodneſs. For, *firſt*, This is the natural influence of ſuch a dependance upon God; it places us always before him, and makes us walk humbly and circumſpectly, as becomes thoſe that are awed by the preſence of

holy a Majeſty: I have *ſet the Lord always before me*; *becauſe he is at my right-hand, I ſhall not be moved,* Pſal. xvi. 1. *Secondly,* We cannot doubt but that God will plentifully beſtow his grace on thoſe, who thus rely upon him. For where can He beſtow it with more advantage to his glory, or to the propagation of holineſs; both of which are ſo dear to him? Who is a ſubject more capable of it, or who can be better entitled to it, than he who thus depends upon God? As he begs it *humbly*, and receives it *thankfully*; ſo he will husband it *carefully*, and employ it *zealouſly*.

§. 3. In *prayer*, *meditation*, and other *inſtrumental* duties of religion, we are to aim at *one* or *all* of theſe *three* things.

1. The quickening and enlivening the *Conſcience*. 2. The confirming and ſtrengthening our *reſolutions* of obedience. 3. The raiſing and keeping up *holy* and *devout affections*. Great is the benefit of *each* of theſe. *Tenderneſs* of *conſcience* will keep us not only from evil, but every appearance of it; increaſe of *ſpiritual ſtrength* will render us ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in all the works of God; and *holy paſſion* will make us abound in them. To ſpiritual *paſſion* we owe the zeal and pleaſure; to ſpiritual *ſtrength* and *liberty*, the conſtancy

ſtancy and uniformity of an holy life; and both *ſtrength* and *paſſion* are generally owing to a *tender* and *enlightened conſcience.* For while the *conſcience* preſerves a *quick* and *nice* ſenſe of good and evil, all the great truths of the goſpel will have their proper force and natural efficacy upon us. Theſe then are the genuine *fruits* of *meditation*, the *euchariſt*, *pſalmody*, and ſuch like. If they do not add life and light to the *conſcience*; if they do not augment our *ſtrength*, nor exalt our *paſſions*; if they do not increaſe our deteſtation of ſin, and our love to God and goodneſs; if they do not quicken and excite devout purpoſes; if they do not engage and refreſh the ſoul by holy joy and heavenly pleaſure; if, I ſay, they do not in ſome degree or other promote *theſe* things, we reap *no* benefit at all from them, or we can never be *certain* that we do. But tho' the ends I have mentioned, be of this great uſe to *all*, and conſequently *all* are obliged to aim at them, yet may the *different* defects and imperfections of *different* Chriſtians, render *one* of theſe ends more neceſſary than *another*; and by conſequence, it will be *wiſdom* more immediately and directly to intend and purſue *that*. For *example*; if a man's *temper* be ſuch, that his *paſſions* do ſoon kindle, and ſoon die again; that he is apt to form

form wiſe and great projects, and as unapt to accompliſh any thing; in *this* caſe, it will be his duty to aim eſpecially at the *increaſe of ſtrength.* But if on the *other* hand, a man's *temper be* cold and phlegmatick, ſlow and heavy; it is but fit that he ſhould particularly apply himſelf to the awakening and exciting *devout affections* in his ſoul. For *as* excellent purpoſes do often miſcarry for want of conſtancy and firmneſs of mind; *ſo* ſteadineſs and firmneſs of mind doth ſeldom effect any great matter, when it wants life and paſſion to put it into motion. *Again*, if one's *paſt* life has been very *ſinful*, or the *preſent* be not very *fruitful*, it will behove ſuch a one to increaſe the *tenderneſs of conſcience*, to add more light and life to its *convictions*; that, by a daily repetition of contrition and compunction, he may waſh off the *ſtain*, or, by the fruitfulneſs of his following life, repair the *barrenneſs* of that paſt. Having thus in few words, both made out the uſefulneſs of thoſe *three ends* I propoſed to a Chriſtian in the performance of *inſtrumental* duties of religion, and ſhewed in what caſes he may be obliged to aim more immediately at *one* than *another*; I will *now* enquire, and that as briefly as I can, *how* theſe *three ends* may be *ſecured* and *promoted.*

1*ſt*, Of

1*ſt*, Of *tenderneſs of conſcience*, or the full and lively convictions of it.

To promote this, the *firſt* thing neceſſary is *meditation*. No man, who diligently ſearches and ſtudies the *Book of God*, can be a ſtranger to *himſelf*, or to his *duty*. *Not* to his *duty*; for this *book* reveals the whole *will of God* in clear and full terms; it gives us ſuch infallible *characters* of good and evil, right and wrong, as render our ignorance or error inexcuſable: it points out the great *ends* of *life* ſo plainly, and conducts to them by ſuch general and unerring *rules*, that there is no variety of circumſtances can ſo perplex and ravel our duty, but that an *honeſt* man by the help of this may eaſily diſcover it. For this reaſon 'tis, that the *Word of God* is called *light*, becauſe it does diſtinguiſh between good and evil, right and wrong; and like a *lamp* does manifeſt the path which we are to chuſe, and diſperſes that *miſt* and *darkneſs*, with which the luſt of man, and the ſubtilty of hell has covered it. And for this reaſon 'tis, that the good have ſuch a *value*, and the wicked ſuch an *averſion* for the *Book of God*. For *every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God,*

God, John iii. 20, 21. Nor can he that ſtudies the *Word of God*, be a ſtranger to *himſelf* any more than to his duty. For this light ranſacks all the receſſes of the ſoul; it traces all its affections back to their firſt ſprings and ſources; it lays open all its deſires and projects, and ſtrips its moſt ſecret purpoſes of all their diſguiſe: *For the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword; piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 12. In a word, if we would preſerve the *conſcience quick* and *ſenſible*, we muſt be daily converſant in the *Book of God*. For this commands with that authority, inſtructs with that clearneſs, perſuades with that force, reproves with that purity, prudence, and charity, that we ſhall not eaſily be able to reſiſt it; it deſcribes righteouſneſs and ſin in ſuch true and lively colours, proclaims rewards and puniſhments in ſuch powerful and moving language, that it rouzes even the dead in ſin, penetrates and wounds the ſtupid and obdurate.

To *meditation* we muſt add *prayer*. For this is a very proper and eſſential *means* to refreſh and renew in the ſoul, the hatred of ſin, and love of goodneſs; and to improve thoſe impreſſions which *meditation* has

has made upon it. We cannot eaſily put up petitions to *God* with confidence, unleſs we do the things that *pleaſe* him; for our hearts will miſgive us, and our very petitions will reproach us: and the mere *thought* of entring more immediately into the preſence of God does oblige us to a more careful tryal and examination of our actions. For God being not only omniſcient, but juſt and holy too, we can no more flatter our ſelves with the hope of pardon for any ſin into which we are betrayed by fondneſs or negligence, than we can imagine him ignorant of it. But this is not all; we are to pray, that God would enable us to *ſearch* out and *diſcover* our own hearts. *Pſal.* cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.* And if we do this ſincerely, God will undoubtedly grant our requeſts; and will lay open to us all our preſent defects and infirmities, and ſhew us how far ſhort we come of the *glory of God:* that *Perfection* of holineſs and happineſs, which many eminent *ſaints* actually arrived at upon earth. And we may be ſure, *that* light which breaks in upon our mind with this brightneſs, will not ſuffer any latent *corruptions* to continue undiſcovered; nor permit us to forget the ſtains and ruins, which the *ſins* of our paſt life

life have left behind them. *Converſation* is another way, by which we learn to know our ſelves, and by which *conſcience* is kept *awake*, and in its *vigour*. How convictive, how *moving* is the diſcourſe of a devout and pious *friend?* when he complains, or when he rejoyces; when he relates the hiſtory of his own experience; when he lets us ſee the deſigns he has formed, and the excellent ends his ſoul thirſts after; how does our heart burn within us? what variety of *affections* does it *raiſe* in us, when he makes his remarks on human nature and the world; when he bewails the diſhonour of God and the decay of religion amongſt us; when he relates the miſery and misfortune of ſinners, and obſerves the particular ſins and follies that occaſion it? how often does he hereby *provoke* us to wiſe *reflections* on our ſelves? how many new beauties does he *diſcover* to us in virtue? how many deformities in ſin, which had eſcaped *our* obſervations? but 'tis not the *converſation* only of my friend; but his *life* alſo, from which I derive, or may do ſo, *inſtruction* and *admonition*. The *Perfections* of my *friend*, are the gentleſt and the mildeſt, and yet the moſt awakening *reproofs* too of my *own defects*; and by the freſhneſs and luſtre of the *virtue*, I diſcern beſt the weakneſs and the dimneſs of my *own*. How often

often have I been moved to turn my thoughts with ſome *indignation* on my own heats and commotions, while I have admired and bleſs the ſweetneſs and the gentleneſs, the ſoftneſs and the calm, very conſpicuous in an excellent friend? and when I have heard *another* mention his *nightly praiſes*, and thoſe divine thoughts which filled the *intervals* of his *ſleep*, and made thoſe hours that are ſo burthenſome to ſome, the moſt entertaining and delightful parts of his reſt, how have I been inwardly filled with confuſion and ſhame? how have I upbraided and reproached myſelf, condemned the ſluggiſhneſs of my days, the dulneſs and the wanderings of my ſoul by night? and I believe every ſincere man muſt find himſelf thus affected on the like occaſions. For in *this* kind of *reproof*, which I talk of, there is ſomething more of force and authority than is to be found in any *other*; for the example of friends, does not only teach us *what* we are to do, but demonſtrates alſo that it *may* be done. Nor does virtue any-where appear with ſo lovely and charming an *air* as in a friend. But after all, amongſt all the benefits we gain by excellent friendſhips, we ought not to reckon *this* as the *leaſt*, that it is one, and that an indiſpenſable *office* of *friendſhip*, to *admoniſh* and *reprove*: *For the reproofs of inſtruction are the paths of life*,

life, Prov. vi. 23. But then, that we may be capable of this bleſſing, we muſt diſpoſe our minds to *expect* and *bear* reproof: we muſt ſtrive after an humble and teachable temper; and we muſt invite and encourage our friends to this kindeſt office; not only by unaffected requeſts, but alſo by *obeying* their advice, *pardoning* whatever infirmity may be interſperſed with it, and *loving* them the better, as indeed they deſerve: for there is ſcarce any *better* proof of their affection, prudence and courage, which they are capable of giving us.

2*dly*, A *ſecond* end of *inſtrumental* duties is the *increaſe of ſpiritual ſtrength*. Now *ſpiritual ſtrength* conſiſts in the power and dominion we have over our affections and actions: and it ſtands upon *two baſes*; the *reduction of ſin*, and the *growth of virtue*; whatever does weaken and reduce our propenſions to ſin, whatever promotes the ſubjection of the body, adds power and authority to the mind, and renders virtue more eaſy and pleaſant. And becauſe virtues have a mutual connexion and dependance upon one another; therefore whatever promotes any one promotes all. But eſpecially, whatever ſtrengthens our hope, or quickens our fear, or enlarges our knowledge, and encreaſes our faith; this does confirm and eſta-

eſtabliſh our reſolution more than any thing elſe. *Faith* is the *root*, *fear* the *guard*, and *hope* the *ſpur* of all our virtues. Faith convinces us what is our duty; fear makes us impartial, diligent, and watchful; hope, reſolved and active in the proſecution of it. It being thus clear *what* our *ſpiritual ſtrength* conſiſts in, it will be eaſy to diſcern by what *means* we are to gain it. But I can here only ſuggeſt thoſe hints and intimations which the *reader* muſt upon occaſion, as he needs, enlarge and improve.

1. *Meditation* is the *firſt* thing neceſſary. We muſt often ſurvey the grounds and foundations of our faith; we muſt conſider frequently and ſeriouſly the *ſcripture topicks* of hope and fear, ſuch are the death of *Jeſus*, a judgment to come, the holineſs and juſtice, and the omnipreſence of *God:* we muſt diligently obſerve the wiles and ſtratagems of *Satan*, the arts and inſinuations of the *world* and *fleſh*, and mark the progreſs of *ſin* from its very beginning to maturity; and all this with a particular regard to the corruption of our own *nature*, and the deceitfulneſs of our own *hearts*. We muſt often ponder upon the beauty and peace of *holineſs*, the love of *God* and of *Jeſus*, the virtues, ſufferings, and crowns of *martyrs*. And, *finally*, if we will increaſe in *ſtrength*,

we muſt practiſe this duty of *meditation* often, and we muſt not ſuffer our ſelves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevailed with to intermit it on any ſlight and trivial pretences. And becauſe we are not always *maſters* of our own *affairs*, nor conſequently of our *time*; therefore ought we to have ever ready at hand, a good collection of *texts*, which contain, in *few* words, the power and ſpirit of *goſpel motives*, the *perfection* and beauty of duties, and the ſubſtance of advice and counſel: and to fix theſe ſo in our *memory*, that they may ſerve as a *ſhield* for us to oppoſe, as our *Saviour* did, *againſt the darts of the devil*, and as a *ſupply* of excellent and uſeful thoughts upon a ſudden: ſo that in all the little interruptions of buſineſs, and the many little vacancies of the day, the mind, which is an active and buſy ſpirit, may never want a proper *ſubject* to work upon; much leſs loſe it ſelf in wild and lazy amuſements, or *defile* itſelf by vain or vicious thoughts. But we muſt not only take care that *meditation* be frequent, but alſo that it be not looſe and roving. To which end it will be neceſſary to ſtudy our *ſelves* as well as the *ſcriptures*, and to be intimately acquainted with the advantages and diſadvantages of our conſtitution, and our ſtate; ſo that in our *meditations* on the *ſcriptures*,

ſcriptures, we may more particularly have an eye to thoſe vices *we* are moſt obnoxious to, and thoſe virtues which are either more neceſſary, or more feeble and undergrown.

Next after *meditation* muſt follow *prayer*. Great is the *power* of *prayer* in promoting Chriſtian ſtrength and fortitude; whether we conſider its *prevalence upon God*, or its natural *influence upon our ſelves*. If we conſider the *latter*, what divine force and energy is there in the confidences of faith, the joys of hope, the earneſt longings and deſires of love, the tender ſorrows of contrition, the delight of praiſes and thankſgivings, the adorations and ſelf-depreſſions of a profound humility, and the reſolutions and vows of a perfect abhorrence of, and holy zeal and indignation againſt ſin! how do theſe things mellow and enrich the ſoul! how do they raiſe it higher and higher above *the corruption which is in the world through luſt!* how do they renew it daily, and make it a *partaker of the divine Nature!* the repetition of the ſame acts naturally begets an habit; an habit is the ſtrength and perfection of the ſoul; for it is a diſpoſition ripened and confirmed by cuſtom. How naturally then muſt *prayer* fortify the mind, ripen good diſpoſitions, or add ſtrength and perfection to good habits! ſince it is

nothing elſe but a repeated *exerciſe* of almoſt all the graces of the goſpel, repentance, faith, hope, charity, and the like: and it ought to be obſerved, that *prayer* gives us a frequent opportunity of exerciſing *thoſe* virtues, which we ſhould not otherwiſe be ſo often obliged to do. If, *ſecondly*, we enquire into the *prevalence of prayer with God*, we ſhall have further reaſons yet to reſolve, that it is a moſt effectual *means of increaſing our ſpiritual ſtrength.* What will God deny to the prayer of a righteous man? He may deny him temporal things, becauſe they are not good for him. He may refuſe to remove a temptation, becauſe this is often an occaſion of his own glory, and his ſervant's reward; but he will never refuſe him grace to conquer it. He will no more deny his Spirit to one that earneſtly and ſincerely begs it, than the natural parent will bread to his hungry and craving child. And no wonder, ſince grace is as neceſſary to the ſpiritual life as bread to the natural; the goodneſs of God is more tender and compaſſionate than any inſtinct in human nature; and the purity and perfection of God more zealouſly ſollicitous for the holineſs and immortality of *his* children, than earthly parents can be for a ſickly periſhing life of theirs. Thus then 'tis plain, that *prayer* contributes wonderfully to the

ſtrengthening

ſtrengthening and *eſtabliſhing* the mind of man in goodneſs. But then we muſt remember, that it muſt have theſe *two qualifications*; it muſt be *frequent* and *inceſſantly importunate*. 1. It muſt be *frequent*. I would have this rule complied with as far as it may, even in our ſtated, regular, and ſolemn addreſſes to God. But becauſe buſineſs, and ſeveral obligations we lie under to the world, do often preſs hard upon us; therefore muſt I give the ſame counſel *here*, which I did before under the *head* of *meditation*; that is, to have always ready and imprinted in our *memory* ſeveral *texts of ſcripture*, containing the moſt weighty and important truths, in the moſt piercing and moving language; that we may be able to form theſe on a ſudden into *ejaculations*, in which our *ſouls* may mount up into *heaven*, amidſt the ardours and tranſports of deſires and praiſe, as the angel did, in the flame of *Manoah*'s ſacrifice. 2. *Prayer* muſt be *inceſſantly importunate*. *Importunate* it will be, if the ſoul be prepared and diſpoſed as it ought; that is, if it be diſengaged from this world, and poſſeſſed entirely with the belief and earneſt expectation of a better; if it be humbled in itſelf, diſclaim all ſtrength and merit of its own, and reſt wholly on the goodneſs and all-ſufficiency of God. I add *inceſſantly*, in conformity

to the *parables* of our *Lord*, Luke xi. 8. and xviii. 5. and the ἀδιαλείπτως of the *apoſtle*, 1 Theſſ. v. 17. And whoever conſiders human nature well, and remembers how ſoon pious motions vaniſh, and how little they effect, will diſcern a plain reaſon, both for *vehemence* and *perſeverance* in *prayer:* for *vehemence*, that the ſoul may be deeply impreſſed by pious paſſions; for *perſeverance*, that ſuch impreſſions may not be effaced and obliterated. Nor let any one fancy, that *prayer* thus qualified has not a better influence upon *God*, as well as upon *our ſelves:* 'tis true, *God* is void of the painfulneſs and defects of *human* paſſions, but not of the Perfection of *divine* ones. Woe were to us, if God were an inflexible, inexorable Deity, and incapable of being wrought upon by the inceſſant importunity of his poor creatures: woe were to us, if the ſoftneſs and the tenderneſs of the *divine Nature* did not infinitely exceed the little reſemblances of it in *man*. If, in a word, God did not abound in goodneſs, mercy, and compaſſion, more eaſily to be moved and excited than thoſe human paſſions that bear ſome *analogy* to them. Next to *converſation with God by prayer*, the *converſation of good men* does wonderfully contribute to the building us up in faith and virtue. How does the ſenſe and experience of ſuch as deſerve our

our eſteem and affection, ſettle and eſtabliſh our judgment when they concur with us! how does their knowledge enlighten us, their reaſon ſtrengthen our faith, and their example inflame us with emulation! A pious friendſhip renders religion it ſelf more engaging: it ſanctifies our very diverſions and recreations, and makes them miniſter to virtue; it minds us when we are forgetful, ſupports and encourages us when we faint and tire, reproves and corrects us when we give back, and recalls us into the right path when we go out of it. This *is*, or this *ſhould* be, the buſineſs of *converſation*, the end and advantage of *friendſhip*: we ſhould be often *talking* together of the things of God, *communicating* and laying open the ſtate of our ſouls, our fears, our hopes, our improvements, and defects; we ſhould *watch* over one another, *comfort* and *ſupport* one another; our *diſcourſe* ſhould always miniſter new warmth, or new ſtrength to our holy faith and love. But among *all* the *means of grace*, there is *no one* does ſo much *corroborate* and *nouriſh* the ſoul of man as the *Holy Euchariſt*. How many wiſe and impartial reflections does the *preparation* for it occaſion? What unfeigned humility, and what a profound awe of the divine Majeſty, does a previous *ſelf-examination* beget in us? What a tender ſenſe of the

divine Love does the *contemplation* of the whole myſtery inkindle? What firmneſs and reſolution do we derive from freſh *vows* and repeated *engagements*; and theſe offered up with ſo much *ſolemnity?* And how much, finally, is the habit of holineſs improved by that *ſpiritual pleaſure*, which the ſenſible *aſſurances* of grace and ſalvation work in us, by that *awe* and holy *fear* which the whole action leaves behind on our minds, and the *zeal*, *vigilance*, and *circumſpection* it obliges us to for the time following? Not to mention here, how the participation of this *holy ſacrament* obliges us to a moſt ſolemn *exerciſe* of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jeſus, of brotherly love and charity, and the hope of immortality and glory. *Here*, in a word, we prepare to meet *God*, as we would do in death and judgment; *here* we make an open profeſſion of our holy faith, renounce the world and fleſh, all our ſinful or vain deſires; devote our ſelves to the ſervice of *Jeſus*; and learn to expect happineſs from nothing elſe, but the merits and the imitation of his Croſs. So profound is the *wiſdom* of this inſtitution, that it evidently ſpeaks *God* the *author* of it, and proclaims the too common *neglect* of it in moſt parts of *this nation*, an *inexcuſable* ſin and folly.

3. A *third end* of *inſtrumental* duties of religion, is the *raiſing* and *keeping up holy* and *devout affections*. I know not why *paſſion* is ſo commonly undervalued and diſparaged in *religion*, unleſs they, who thus treat it, mean nothing by it, but a ſhort-lived and ſuperficial commotion of the mind, which leaves no print or reliſh behind it, and is preſently ſucceeded by ſin and folly. *Holy paſſion* is the vigour and ſtrength of the ſoul; 'tis the ſtate and frame of the mind when it is thoroughly moved and affected. And therefore to form to one's ſelf *religion* deſtitute of *paſſion*, is little better than to content one's ſelf with one that is lazy, lukewarm, and lifeleſs. And tho' there be ſome *tempers* very unapt to be *moved*, yet 'tis hard to imagine how even theſe can be wrought up to a reſolution, or that reſolution be ſupported and continued without their being affected ſo thoroughly, as to feel either a *real* paſſion, or ſomething very nearly *approaching* one. 'Tis an excellent frame of ſpirit, when the ſoul is eaſily elevated and tranſported into *holy paſſion:* and I find that all thoſe *virtues*, or rather *acts of virtue*, which are deſcribed to the life, and which are by all judged moſt perfect and lovely, have moſt of *paſſion* in them. How *warm* and *paſſionate* was the *love* of *David* for his *God!* what flame, what

vehemence

vehemence of desire was he moved by, when he cries out, *Psal.* xlii. 1, 2. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.* What awful concussions and agitations of spirit did he feel, when he thus describes his *fear! My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments,* Psal. cxix. 120. What afflictions of soul what tenderness of heart do we meet with in the *repentance* of St. *Peter*, when *he went forth and wept bitterly!* of *Mary Magdalen*, or whoever that *woman* in *Luke* vii. was, when *she washed the feet of our Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head!* and of the *royal Psalmist*, when he *watered his couch with his tears*, Psal. vi. 6. Nor were the pleasures of *assurance* less sensible and vehement than the sorrows of *repentance*, when the *first Christians rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and hopes full of glory.* Shall I here add *that* holy *indignation* against *sin*, *that* vehement desire of making some *reparation* for it, which is the effect of godly sorrow, that *zeal* and *fervency* of spirit in the service of God, which is the *highest* character of *Perfection* it self? Shall I call these *passions?* I must not; for tho' they have the heat and agitation of *passion*, they have in them the firmness and steadiness of an *habit*. And I wish with all my heart,

heart, that all those other excellent *affections* of soul, which I before named, could be rendered *natural* and *habitual*. The *nearer* we come to *this*, undoubtedly the *perfecter*. I doubt mortality is incapable of any such height: but the more *frequent* as well as the more *vehement* and *fervent* such *affections* are, the *better* certainly; for great is the force and virtue of *holy passion*; the flame of *love* refines our nature, and purifies it from all its dross; the tears of a *godly sorrow* extinguish all our carnal and worldly lusts; and the agitations of *fear* preserve the chastity and purity of the soul. 'Tis plain then, that our religion ought to be animated by *holy passions*; that the more frequent and natural these grow, the more *perfect* we are; that being the most excellent frame of spirit, when we are most apt to be sensibly and thoroughly *affected* by divine truths. By what *means* we may attain to this, is *now* briefly to be considered. 'Tis certain, that great and important, wonderful and glorious *truths*, will not fail to affect us, and that throughly, unless lust or infidelity have rendered us stupid and impenetrable. And that *gospel-truths* are *such*, is no doubt at all; let the conviction be full, the representation lively, and the *truth* will do its work. 'Tis for want of such circumstances and such sensible notions of

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an object as may ſtrike the imagination; for want of cloſe and particular applications, when *divine truths* do not move us. This now does not only call us to the frequent *meditation* of the moſt *affecting* ſubjects, the majeſty and omnipreſence of God; the ſuffering of Chriſt, death and judgment, heaven and hell; but it ſhews alſo, how to model and form our *meditations*, that they prove not cold and ſluggiſh. Let the object of our thoughts be deſcribed by the moſt *ſenſible* images or reſemblances; let it be clad with the moſt *natural* circumſtances; let it be made as *particular* as it can, by fixing its eye *upon* us, and pointing its motion *towards* us: but above all, and in the firſt place, let the *proof* of it be clear and ſtrong. *Prayer* is an exerciſe very apt to move the *paſſion:* the mind having diſengaged it ſelf from all earthly and bodily affections, is prepared for the impreſſion of *truth* and the *Spirit of God*; it draws nearer into the preſence of God, and the ſenſe of this ſheds an awful reverence upon it; it has a clearer, calmer, and more ſerious *view* of divine things, than when it is obſcured and diſturbed by worldly objects. In a word, *meditation* is in *this* exerciſe rendered more *ſolemn* and more *particular*; and when the holy fire is kindled in the ſoul, it dilates and diffuſes it ſelf more

more and more, till the ſtrength of deſire, the vehemence of holy love tranſcending the weakneſs of this mortal nature, we *faint* under the *paſſions* that we cannot *bear*. The *Lord's Supper* is an holy rite, wonderfully adapted to raiſe excellent *paſſions*: *Here* Chriſt is, as it were *ſet forth crucified amongſt us*; we ſee his *body* broken, and his *blood* poured forth; *here* with a devout joy we receive and embrace him by faith and love in thoſe *ſymbols* of his body and blood, and *pledges* of his love. The *ſoul* muſt be very *ill prepared*, it muſt have very imperfect notions of ſin and damnation, the croſs of Chriſt, grace and ſalvation, which is not ſenſible of a *croud* of holy *paſſions* ſpringing up in it at *this ſacrament*. *Hymns* and *Pſalms* have, by I know not what natural *magick*, a peculiar force and operation upon a pious mind. *Divine poetry* has a noble elevation of thoughts; it does not deviſe and counterfeit *paſſions*, but only *vents* thoſe which it *feels*; and theſe are pure and lovely, kindled from above. Therefore are all its characters natural, its deſcription lively, its language moving and powerful; and all is ſo directly ſuited to a *devout* mind, that it preſently enters, moves, and actuates it, inſpires and informs it with the very *paſſions* it deſcribes. And though all good men are not *equally* moved in this duty,

duty, yet all, I believe, are *more* or *less* moved. It was very much the buſineſs of the *prophets*, and all of *prophetick education*; our *Lord* and his *diſciples* practiſed it frequently; it was ever a great part of *religious joy*, and one of the greateſt pleaſures of pious *retirement*: and I wiſh from my heart the eſteem of it were revived in *our* days; I perſwade myſelf it would add much to the *warmth* and *pleaſure* of devotion; it would contribute to introduce *religion* into our *families*; and, for ought I know, into our very *recreations* and *friendſhips*. And this minds me, that as I have under every *foregoing head* taken notice of the advantages of *converſation*, ſo I ſhould not forget it *here*. This has a lively influence upon our minds, and always kindles in the ſoul a gentle heat. And did we but accuſtom our ſelves to *entertain* one another with diſcourſe about another world; did we mingle the *praiſes of God* with the feaſts and joys of life; did we retire to our *country-houſes* to contemplate the variety and riches of divine wiſdom and bounty in thoſe *natural* ſcenes of pleaſure which the *country* affords, and did we now and then invite our *friends* to join with us in offering up *Hallelujahs* to God on this account, with brightneſs and ſerenity, what calm and pleaſure would this diffuſe through all our ſouls, through all

all our days! to this that I have ſaid touching the exciting *holy paſſions*, I will only add one *obſervation*, formed upon thoſe words of the *apoſtle*, James v. 13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him ſing Pſalms.* That *religion* muſt be accommodated to *nature*, and that devout *paſſions* will ſoon ſhoot up, when they are engrafted upon a *natural* ſtock. With which I will join this *other*, that ſince we are moſt affected by ſuch truths as are moſt particular, circumſtantiated, and ſenſible, and therefore imprint themſelves more eaſily and deeply on our imagination; for this reaſon I ſhould recommend the *reading* the *lives* of *ſaints* and *excellent perſons*, were they not generally writ ſo, that we have reaſon to deſire ſomewhat more of the ſpirit of *piety* in the *learned*, and more of *judgment* in the *pious*, who have employed their pens on this argument.

§. 4. The immediate *ends* of *diſcipline* are the *ſubduing the pride of the heart*, and the *reducing the appetites of the body*: By *diſcipline*, I here underſtand whatever *voluntary rigours* we impoſe upon our *ſelves*, or whatever *voluntary reſtraints* we lay upon our allowed *enjoyments*. And when I ſay, that the *humiliation* of the *heart*, and *ſubjection* of the *body* are the imme-

immediate ends of *both*, I do not exclude any *other* which may be *involved* in theſe, or *reſult* from them. Nor, of what *importance* theſe two things are, I need not ſhew. For ſince all ſin is diſtinguiſhed in ſcripture into the filthineſs of the *ſpirit* and the *fleſh*, it is plain, that the *pride* of the *heart*, and the *luſt* of the *body*, are the *two* great cauſes of all immorality and uncleanneſs. And therefore theſe are the *two* great *ends* which the wiſe and good have ever had in their *eye* in all their acts of *ſelf-denial* and *mortification*. This is ſufficiently atteſted by the example of *David*, Pſal. cxxxi. *Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exerciſe myſelf in great matters, which are too high for me: But I refrain my ſoul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my ſoul is even as a weaned child.* And from that other of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. ix. 25. 26, 27. *And every one that ſtriveth for the maſtery, is temperate in all things: Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection; leſt that by any means when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away.* Whoever thus mortifies the *pride* of the *heart*, whoever thus brings under the *body*, will ſoon find himſelf

ſelf truly ſet *free*, and *maſter* of himſelf and fortune: he will be able to *run the way of God's commandments*, and to advance on ſwiftly towards *Perfection*, and the pleaſure and happineſs that attends it.

And to *attain* theſe bleſſed *ends*, I do not think that we need enſnare our ſouls in the perpetual bonds of *monaſtick vows*; I do not think that we are to expoſe our ſelves by any *ridiculous* or *fantaſtick* obſervances: there is, I ſay, no *need* of this; for we may, as oft as we ſhall ſee fit, retrench our pleaſures, abate of the ſhew and figure of life; we may renounce our own wills to comply with theirs who cannot ſo well pretend either to authority or diſcretion: and if theſe things cannot be done in ſome cirumſtances, without becoming *fools for Chriſt*; that is, without that tameneſs, that condeſcenſion, that diminution of our ſelves which will never comport with the humours and the faſhions of the world; here is ſtill the more room for *mortification*, and for a nearer and more eminent imitation of the bleſſed *Jeſus*: provided ſtill we decline all affectation of ſingularity; and when we practiſe any extraordinary inſtance of *ſelf-denial*, we be ever able to juſtify it to religious and judicious perſons, by the propoſal of ſome excellent end. *Faſting* indeed is plainly deſcribed in *ſcripture*; and tho' the *obligation*

to it, with respect to its frequency and measure, be not the same on *all*, yet *all* should some time or other practise it, as far as the rules of *Christian prudence* will permit. And I have often thought, that *fasting* should generally consist, rather in abstinence from *pleasing meats*, than from *all*; not the food which *nourishes* our strength, but that which *gratifies* the palate, ministring most directly to wantonness and luxury.

For the better regulating of voluntary discipline, I propose, by way of advice, three things. 1. I do not think it best to bring our selves under any perpetual and unalterable ties in any instance of self-denial: there is a virtue in *enjoying* the world, as well as in *renouncing* it; and 'tis as great an excellence of religion to know how to *abound*, as how to *suffer want*. Nay, what is more, all voluntary austerities are in order to give us a power and dominion over our selves in the general course of a prosperous life. And, lastly, I very much doubt, when once a man has long and constantly *accustomed* himself to any rigour, whether it *continue* to have much of *mortification* in it, or whether it so effectually tend to promote our *spiritual liberty*, as it would if we did *return* to it but *now* and *then*, as we saw occasion. 2. We must not multiply *unnecessary* severities; and

and that no man may think more needful than really are, I obſerve here, that as there are very *few* who have not in their *nature* very conſiderable *infirmities*, ſo are there *as few* who have not in their *fortune* very conſiderable *inconveniences*: and if they would apply themſelves to the *maſtering* of both theſe as they ought, they would ſtand in *leſs need* of the *diſcipline* of arbitrary auſterities There are many things too *trifling* to be taken notice of, which yet do prove ſufficient to diſturb the quiet of moſt, and betray them to many paſſions and indecencies: nay, the weakneſſes of good men are ſometimes fed by temptations of very little moment Now, to *ſurmount* theſe temptations, and to frame and accommodate the mind to bear the little ſhocks and juſtles which we daily meet with, without any diſcompoſure or diſpleaſure, is a matter of great *uſe* to the tranquillity of life, and the maturity of virtue. To be able to *bear* the pride of one, and the ſtupidity of another; one while to encounter rudeneſs, another while neglect, without being *moved* by either; to *ſubmit* to noiſe, diſorder, and the diſtraction of many little affairs, when one is naturally a lover of quietneſs and order, or when the mind is intent upon things of importance; in a word, to *digeſt* the perpetual diſappointments which

we meet with, both in buſineſs and pleaſure, and in all the little projects, which not the elegant and ingenious only, but people of all ſtations and all capacities purſue; to *ſuffer* all the humours and follies, the errors, artifices, indecencies, and faults of thoſe we have to do with, with that temper we ought, that is, with a *calmneſs* which proceeds, not from an unconcernment for the good of others, but a juſt dominion over our own ſpirits: *this* is a great *height*; and to train our ſelves up to it daily with much patience, vigilance, and application of mind, is the *beſt diſcipline*: tho' I do not mean hereby to exclude all *voluntary impoſitions*; for, in order to *maſter* the evils which we cannot avoid, it may be of good uſe now and then to form the mind by *voluntary tryals* and difficulties of our own chuſing. 3. Laſtly, We muſt ever have a care not to loſe the *ſubſtance* for the *ſhadow*; not to reſt in the *means*, and neglect the *end*; being much taken up in *diſcipline*, without producing any *fruit* of it For this is taking much pains to little purpoſe; travelling much without making any progreſs. But much more muſt we take care in the *next* place, that the *diſcipline* we put our ſelves upon, do not produce any *ill fruit*. To which end, we muſt carefully obſerve *three* things. 1. That we keep to that *moderation*

deration which ſpiritual *prudence* requires; neither expoſing nor entangling our ſelves, nor diſcouraging others by *exceſſes* and *extravagancies*. 2. That our *ſelf-denial* never betrays us into *pride* or *uncharitableneſs*; for if it tempts us to over-rate our ſelves and to deſpiſe others, this is a flat *contradiction* to one of the main ends of Chriſtian diſcipline, which is, the *humiliation* of the *heart*. 3. That we ever preſerve, nay, increaſe the *ſweetneſs* and *gentleneſs* of our minds; for whatever makes us ſour and moroſe, or peeviſh and unſociable, makes us certainly ſo much worſe; and, inſtead of begetting in us nearer reſemblances of the *Divine* Nature, gives us a very ſtrong tincture of a *deviliſh* one. *Athanaſius* therefore, in the life of *Anthony the hermite*, obſerves, amongſt other his great virtues, that after thirty years ſpent in a ſtrange kind of retired and ſolitary life, ἡ γὰρ ὄψις ὡς ὄρει τεταρειὼς καὶ ἦν γεγυμνωμένος, ἄγελον εἶχε τὸ ἦθος, ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρίεις ἦν, καὶ πολιτικός. He did not appear to his friends with a ſullen or ſavage, but with an obliging ſociable *air*: and there is indeed but little reaſon, why the *look* ſhould be louring and contracted, when the *heart* is filled with joy and charity, goodneſs and pleaſure. A ſerene open *countenance*, and a chearful grave *deport-*

ment, does beſt ſuit the tranquillity, purity, and dignity of a Chriſtian mind.

§. 5. *Laſtly*, *Some* kinds of *life* are better ſuited and accommodated to the great *ends* of religion and virtue than *others*. I ſhall not here enter into an examination of the advantages or diſadvantages there are in the *ſeveral kinds of life* with reference to religion. The ſettling *this* and ſeveral *other* things relating to it, was one main deſign of my *laſt book*. All therefore that I have *here* to do, is but to make one plain *inference* from all that has been advanced in *this chapter*. If *Perfection* and *happineſs* cannot be obtained without a frequent and ſerious *application* of our ſelves to the *means* here inſiſted on; then 'tis plain that we ought to caſt our *lives*, if we can, into ſuch a *method*, that we may be in a *capacity* to do this. To ſpeak more particularly and cloſely; ſince *meditation*, *prayer*, and *holy converſation* are ſo neceſſary to *quicken* the *conſcience*, *excite* our *paſſions*, and *fortify* our *reſolutions*; it is evident that it is as neceſſary ſo to model and form our lives, that we may have time enough to beſtow on theſe. For they, whoſe minds and time are taken up by the *world*, have very little leiſure for things of *this* nature, and are very little diſpoſed to them, and as ill qualified for them. As to *converſation*, as the

the world goes now, 'tis not to be expected that it ſhould have in it any reliſh of piety, unleſs between ſuch as have entered into a cloſe and ſtrict *friendſhip*. But the *worldly man* is a ſtranger to true *friendſhip*; 'tis too ſacred, too delicate a thing, for a mind devoted to the *world*, to be capable of. A regard to intereſt, to ſome outward forms and decencies; the gratification of ſome natural inclination, the neceſſity of ſome kind of diverſion and enjoyment, may invite him to more *familiarity* with ſome, than others. But 'tis hard to believe, that there ſhould be any thing in ſuch *combinations*, of *that* which is the very life and ſoul of *friendſhip*, a ſincere and undeſigning paſſion, increaſed by mutual confidences and obligations, and ſupported and ſtrengthened by virtue and honour. As to *prayer*, *men of buſineſs* do, I doubt, oftener *read* or *ſay prayers*, than *pray*; for 'tis very hard to imagine, that a ſoul that grovels perpetually here upon earth, that is inceſſantly ſollicitous about the things of this world, and that enters abruptly upon this duty without any *preparation*, ſhould immediately take fire, be filled with heavenly vigour, and be tranſported with earneſt and impatient deſire of grace and glory. Ah! how hard is it for him, who hungers and thirſts perpetually after the profits of *this world*, to *hunger and*

thirſt after righteouſneſs too! if ſuch minds as *theſe* retain the belief of a providence, ſome awe of God, and ſome degree of gratitude towards him, 'tis as *much* as may reaſonably be expected from them: and may *this* avail them as far as it *can!* Laſtly, as to *meditation*, how can it be imagined, that ſuch, whoſe minds and bodies are fatigued and harraſſed by *worldly buſineſs*, ſhould be much inclined to it, or well prepared for it? How ſhould *theſe* men form any notion of a perfect and exalted virtue, of devout and heavenly paſſion? What conceptions can they have of the power and joy of the Holy Ghoſt, of poverty of ſpirit, or purity of heart, or the diffuſion of the love of God in our ſouls? What idea's can they entertain of an heaven, or of angelical pleaſure and beatitude? In a word, the *religion* of men intent upon *this world*, when they pretend to any, which too often they do not, conſiſts eſpecially in *two* things, in *abſtaining* from *wickedneſs*, and *doing the works* of their *civil calling*; and how far they may be ſenſible of *higher* obligations, I determine not. Good God! what a *mercy* it is to theſe poor creatures, that 'tis the faſhion of their country, as well as a precept of our religion, to dedicate *one* day in *ſeven* to the ſervice of God and their ſouls! but have I not often *taught*, that *purity of intention* converts the *works* of

of a ſecular calling into the *works of God?* I *have* ſo; 'tis univerſally taught; 'tis the doctrine of the goſpel; and therefore I ſhall never *retract* it: but ah! how hard a thing is it for a *worldly* man to *maintain* this *purity of intention!* how hard a thing is it for a mind, eaten up by the love and cares of *this world*, to do all to the honour of God! tho' therefore I cannot *retract* this doctrine, yet the *longer* I live, the *more* reaſon do I ſee for *qualifying* and *guarding* it with this *caution:* let no man that deſires to be *ſaved*, much leſs that deſires to be *perfect*, take ſanctuary in *purity of intention*, while he ſuffers the works of his *ſecular calling* to ingroſs his ſoul, and entirely uſurp his time. If *ſecular works* exclude and thruſt out of doors ſuch as are properly *religious*, it will not be eaſy to conceive, how the power of godlineſs ſhould be maintained, how any wiſe thoughts, or heavenly deſires ſhould be preſerved in ſuch men; or ſhow, finally, thoſe who have utterly given up themſelves to the *wiſdom of this world*, ſhould retain any true value for thoſe maxims of the goſpel, wherein conſiſts the *true wiſdom that is from above.* All that I have ſaid againſt a life of *buſineſs*, may, with equal or greater force, be urged againſt a life of *pleaſure*; I mean *that* which they call *innocent pleaſure:* the

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one and the *other* entangle and enſnare the mind; the *one* and the *other* leave in it a peculiar reliſh, which continues long after the hurry both of pleaſure and buſineſs is over. But all this while, I would not have what I have *ſaid* to be *extended* further than I deſign it, to raiſe *ſcruples* in *virtuous* and *good* men, inſtead of *reforming* the too eager applications of the *earthly* to the things of this world.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the motives *to Perfection. Several motives ſumm'd up in ſhort; and that* great *one, of having the other* life *in our view, inſiſted upon.*

INnumerable are the *motives* to *Perfection*, which offer themſelves to any one that reflects ſeriouſly on this argument. An hearty endeavour after *Perfection* is the beſt proof of *ſincerity*; the neareſt approach to *Perfection*, is the neareſt approach to the utmoſt *ſecurity* this life is capable of. Great is the beauty and lovelineſs of an *exalted* virtue, great the honour and authority of it; and a very happy influence it has even upon our temporal affairs: and to this may be added, the peace and tranquillity of a wiſe mind,

mind, ſanctified affections, and a regular life. Beſides, the love of *God* is boundleſs, and the love of *Jeſus* is ſo too; and therefore demand not a lazy, feeble, or unſteddy virtue, but a ſtrong and vigorous one, a warm and active; ſuch as a true *faith*, great *hopes*, and a paſſionate *love* do naturally excite us to. To all this I might add, that the *Spirit* of God is always preſſing on and advancing, deſirous to communicate *himſelf* to us more and more plentifully, if we be not backward or negligent our ſelves. But theſe, and many other *inforcements* to the duty of *Perfection*, ſhould I enlarge on them, would ſwell this *treatiſe* to an intolerable bulk. Nor indeed is it neceſſary: for the 4th *chapter*, where I treat of the *Fruit of Perfection*, does contain ſuch *motives* to it, as are ſufficient to excite, in any one that reads them, a moſt vehement deſire and thirſt after it. Here therefore all that I think fit to do, is, to put my *reader* in mind of *another life*: in the glories and pleaſures of which, I need not prove that the *perfect* man will have the greateſt ſhare. *This* is a *motive* that muſt never be out of the thoughts of the man that will be *perfect*; and that for *three* reaſons, which I will but juſt mention.

1. Without *another life*, we can never form any true notion of a *perfect virtue*. So-

Sociable and *civil* virtues may be ſupported by *temporal motives*, and framed and modelled by *worldly conveniences*; but a *divine* virtue muſt be built upon a *divine* life, upon a *heavenly* kingdom. The reaſon of this aſſertion is plain; the *means* muſt always bear proportion to the *end*; where therefore the end is an imperfect temporal good, there needs no more than imperfect *unfiniſhed* virtue to attain it; but where the end is heavenly and immortal, the virtue ought to be *ſo* too. Were there no *other* life, the ſtandard and meaſure of the good or evil to be found in actions would be their ſubſerviency to the temporal good or evil of *this* world; and by a neceſſary conſequence, it would be impoſſible to prove any higher degrees of poverty of ſpirit, purity of heart, charity, and the like, to be truly *virtue*, than what we could prove truly *neceſſary* to procure the good, or guard us againſt the evil of *this* life: and if ſo, 'tis eaſy to conclude what *mean* and *beggarly* kind of virtues would be produced from this ground.

2. Without *another life*, all other *motives* to *Perfection* will be inſufficient. For though, generally ſpeaking, ſuch is the contrivance of human nature, that neither the common good of civil *ſociety*, nor the more particular good of *private* men, can

can be provided for, or ſecured, without the practice of ſociable and political *virtues*; yet 'tis certain, that not only in many *extraordinary* caſes there would be no *reward* at all for *virtue*, if there were not one reſerved for it in *another world*; but alſo in *moſt* caſes, if there were not a *future* pleaſure, that did infinitely outweigh the enjoyments of *this* life, men would ſee no *obligation* to *Perfection*. For what ſhould raiſe them above the love of *this* world, if there were no *other?* or above the love of the body, if when they died they ſhould be no more for ever? and certainly our minds would never be able to ſoar very high, nor ſhould we ever arrive at any excellence or Perfection in any action, if we were always under the influence of the love of the *world*, and the *body*.

3. A *life to come* is alone a ſufficient *motive* to *Perfection*. Who will refuſe to *endure hardſhip as a good ſoldier of Chriſt Jeſus*, who firmly believes that *he* is now a ſpectator, and will very ſuddenly come to be a judge and rewarder of his ſufferings? how natural is it to *run with patience the race that is ſet before us*, to him who has an eternal joy, an eternal crown always in his eye? and if a *life to come* can make a man rejoyce even in *ſuffering evil*, how much more in *doing good?* If it enable him to *conquer* in the day of the

church's tryal and affliction, how much more will it enable him to *abound* in all *virtues* in the day of its peace and proſperity? how freely will a man give to the diſtreſſed *members of Chriſt*, who believes that he ſees *Chriſt* himſelf ſtanding by, and receiving it as it were by their hands, and placing it to his own account, to be repaid a thouſand-fold in *the great day of the Lord?* how eaſily will a man allay the ſtorms of paſſion, and caſt away the weapon of revenge and anger, with indignation againſt himſelf, if his faith do but preſent him often with a view of that *Canaan*, which the *meek in heart ſhall inherit* for ever? how importunately will a man pray for the pardon of ſin, whoſe ſenſe, whoſe ſoul, whoſe imagination is ſtruck with a dread of being for ever divided from God, and excluded from the joys and virtues of the bleſſed? how fervently will a man pray for the Spirit of God, for the increaſe of grace, whoſe thoughts are daily ſwallowed up with the contemplation of an eternity; and whoſe mind is as fully poſſeſſed of the certainty and the glory of *another world*, as of the emptineſs and vanity of *this?* how natural, finally, will it be to be poor in ſpirit, and to delight in all the offices of an unfeigned humility, to that man who has the image of *Jeſus waſhing the feet of his diſciples*, and a little

little after *aſcending* up into *heaven*, always before him?

But I know it will be here *objected*, we *diſcern* not this efficacy you attribute to this *motive*. The doctrine of *another life* is the great *article* of the Chriſtian *faith*, and it is every-where preached throughout *Chriſtendom*; and yet men generally ſeem to have as much fondneſs for *this* world, as they could were there no *other*: they practiſe no virtues but ſuch as are profitable and faſhionable, or none any further than they are ſo. To this I *anſwer*; tho' *moſt* act thus, there are *many*, I hope *very many*, who do otherwiſe; and, that *all* in general do *not*, proceeds from want, either of due *conſideration* or firm *belief* of this doctrine of another life. *Firſt*, From not *conſidering* it as we ſhould. 'Tis the greateſt diſadvantage of the objects of *faith*, compared with thoſe of *ſenſe*, that they are diſtant and inviſible. *He* therefore that will be *perfect*, that will derive any ſtrength and virtue from this *motive*, muſt ſupply this diſtance by devout and daily *contemplation*; he muſt fetch the remote objects of *faith* home to him; he muſt render them, as it were, preſent; he muſt ſee and feel them by the ſtrength of *faith*, and the force of *meditation*; which if he do, then will his *faith* certainly prove a vital and victorious *principle*; then will

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no pleaſure in this world be able to combat the aſſured hopes of an *heaven*, nor any worldly evil or difficulty ſuſtained for virtue, be able to confront the terrors of an *hell*. A *ſecond* reaſon why this *motive* doth not operate as it ſhould, is want of *faith*. We doubt, we waver, we ſtagger, we take things upon truſt; aſſenting very ſlightly and ſuperficially to the doctrine of *another life*, and looking upon good works rather as not injurious to *this* world, than ſerviceable to a *better*: and then 'tis no more wonder that the *unbelieving Chriſtian* does not enter into Perfection and reſt, than that the *unbelieving Jew* did not: 'tis no more wonder, if the word of life do not profit the *Chriſtian* when *not believed* by him, than if it do not profit a *pagan* who has *never heard* of it. And what is here ſaid of *infidelity*, is in its meaſure and proportion true when applied to a *weak* and *imperfect faith*. *He* therefore that will be *perfect* muſt daily pray, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*. He muſt daily *conſider* the grounds on which the faith and hope of a Chriſtian ſtand; the expreſs declarations of the divine will concerning the future immortality and glory of the children of God; the demonſtration of this contained in the reſurrection of Jeſus from the dead, and his aſcenſion, and ſeſſion at the right hand

hand of God: and to this he may add, the love of God, the merits of Jesus, and the state and fortune of virtue in this world. From all which one may be able to infer the undoubted *certainty* of *another world*. The *sum* of all amounts to *this*: whoever will be *perfect*, must daily, I should, I think, have said almost hourly, ponder the *blessedness* that attends *Perfection* in *another life*; he must ponder it *seriously*, that he may be throughly persuaded of it; he must ponder it *often*, that the notions of it may be fresh and lively in his soul.

SECT. II.

Of the several parts of Perfection, illumination, liberty, *and* zeal.

WHAT the several *parts* of religious *Perfection* are, will be easily discerned by a very slight reflection, either on the *nature* of *man*, or the general *notion* of *Perfection* already laid down. If we consider *man*, whose *Perfection* I am treating of, as it is plain; that he is made up of *soul* and *body*, so 'tis as plain that moral *Perfection* relates to the *soul*, as the chief subject of it, and to the *body* no otherwise than as the *instrument* of that righteousness which is planted in the *soul*. Now in the *soul* of man we find these three things;

underſtanding, *will*, and *affections*: in the improvement and accompliſhment of which, human *Perfection* muſt conſequently conſiſt. And if we enquire wherein this improvement or accompliſhment lies, 'tis a truth ſo obvious, that it will not need any proof, that *illumination* is the *Perfection* of the *underſtanding*, *liberty* of the *will*, and *zeal* of the *affections*. If, in the next place, we reflect upon the deſcription I have before given of Perfection, nothing is more evident, than that to conſtitute a firm *habit* of righteouſneſs, three things are neceſſary: 1. The *knowledge* of our *duty*, and our obligations to it. 2. The *ſubduing* our *luſts* and *paſſions*, that we may be enabled to perform it. Laſtly, Not only a free, but warm and vigorous *proſecution* of it. In the *firſt* of theſe conſiſts *illumination*; in the *ſecond*, *liberty*; and in the *third*, *zeal*. Upon the whole then 'tis evident, both from the *nature* of *Perfection* and of *man*, that I am now to treat in order of theſe three things, *illumination*, *liberty*, and *zeal*, as ſo many eſſential *parts* of religious *Perfection*. Nor muſt I ſtop here, but muſt to thoſe three unavoidably add *humility*: for whether we conſider the ſins of the *perfect* man's paſt life, or the ſlips and defects of his beſt ſtate; or whether we conſider man's continual dependance upon God in all reſpects, but eſpecially in reference to the

the beginning, progreſs, and conſummation of his *Perfection*; or whether, laſtly, we conſider the ſcantineſs and deficiency, not only of this or that man's *Perfection* in particular, but of human *Perfection* in general, we cannot but conclude, that nothing can become mortal man (even tho' all the excellence human nature is capable of were united in one) better than *humility*. *Humility* therefore muſt begin and compleat religious *Perfection*; it muſt accompany the Chriſtian in every ſtage of his ſpiritual progreſs; it muſt crown all his actions, and add that beauty and excellence, that grace and luſtre to all his other virtues, that is wholly neceſſary to render them acceptable to God.

The general *notion* of *Perfection* being thus reſolved into its *parts*, 'tis plain I am now to diſcourſe of *each* of theſe. And what I have to ſay on *each* ought, according to the ſtrict rules of *method*, to be comprized within the *ſame* chapter: but to conſult the *eaſe* and *benefit* of my *reader*, I ſhall ſlight this nicety, and diſtribute my thoughts into as *many chapters* as I ſhall judge moſt convenient for the eaſe and ſupport of the *memory*.

CHAP. I.

Of illlumination. I. *The diſtinguiſhing characters of illuminating truths.* 1. *They purify us.* 2. *They nouriſh and ſtrengthen us.* 3. *They delight us.* 4. *They procure us a glorious reward.* II. *The nature of illuminating knowledge.* 1. *It muſt be deeply rooted.* 2. *It muſt be diſtinct and clear.* 3. *It muſt be thoroughly concocted.*

§. 1. WHAT it is. It happens in the point of *illumination*, as it does in that of *happineſs:* all men, at firſt hearing, form in general an agreeable and pleaſing *notion* of it; all men admire and love it; but few have any diſtinct and true underſtanding of thoſe things which 'tis made up of. All men conceive *illumination* to be a ſtate of *light* and *knowledge*, as they do *happineſs* to be a ſtate of *pleaſure:* but are as little agreed in particular, wherein conſiſts the light or knowledge which makes the *one*, as wherein conſiſts the pleaſure that makes the *other*. The luſt and paſſion of ſome, the ſuperſtition and prejudice of others; curioſity and confidence, weakneſs and deſign, enthuſiaſm and fancy, embroil and perplex all things. However, every honeſt man hath a *clue*, by which he may eſcape out of this *labyrinth*. The *ſcripture* ſhines with bright and gracious beams through-

throughout all this darkneſs: and, if we will attend to it, we cannot wander into any dangerous miſtake. This deſcribes the ſtate of *illumination* very plainly to us, calling it ſometimes *wiſdom*, ſometimes *knowledge* and *underſtanding*; ſometimes *faith*, ſometimes the *ſpirit of wiſdom* and *revelation*. Next, it acquaints us with the *deſign* and *end* of it; namely, to *convert us from the power of Satan to the ſervice of the living God*, to purify and ſanctify us, to enable us to *approve the holy, acceptable, and perfect will of God*, and, in one word, *to make us wiſe unto ſalvation*. Nay, it proceeds further, and points out to us particularly the *truths*, in the knowledge of which *illumination* conſiſts. Thus the *Old Teſtament* reckons *wiſdom* to be, ſometimes the *knowledge of God*, ſometimes the *knowledge of his law*, ſometimes the *underſtanding of proverbs and parables*; theſe containing as it were the ſoul of moral inſtruction, and wrapping up in a few and lively words, whatever the experience of the aged, or the obſervation of men of the moſt piercing judgment, thought beſt deſerved to be tranſmitted to poſterity. But all this amounts to the ſame thing, and all the deſcriptions of *wiſdom* in the *Old Teſtament* may be ſummed up into that one, *Job* xxvi i. 28. *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart*

from evil is underſtanding. The *New Teſtament* tells us, *this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent:* that *Chriſt is the way, the truth and the life:* that *in him are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge:* that true underſtanding conſiſts in *knowing the will of God; which will is our ſanctification.* And when St. *Paul* underſtands by *wiſdom,* as ſometimes he does, the penetrating into the ſpirit and myſtery, the depths and receſſes of the *Old Teſtament,* and diſcovering the great *deſign* of *man's redemption,* carried on through all the ages of the world, and through a wife variety of diſpenſations, this alters not the *notion* of *illumination:* for this does not point out to us any new or different truths; but only regards one peculiar way of explaining, or eſtabliſhing and confirming the great Chriſtian doctrines. To conclude; we may eaſily learn what ſort of *knowledge* the *Spirit of God* recommends to us above all other, from thoſe *petitions* which St. *Paul* puts up for the *Epheſians* and *Coloſſians.* For the *former* he prays thus; *that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints,*

ſaints, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19, 20. For the *latter* thus: *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God*, Col. i. 9, 10. If from theſe and the like *texts* we form a general *idea* of *illumination*, it will be this: *illumination* is a *ſtate* of *knowledge*, conſiſting in the aboliſhing or relinquiſhing thoſe *errors*, which deprave and pervert our affections, and undermine and ſupplant the empire and authority of reaſon; and in entertaining and embracing thoſe *truths*, which purify the one, and reſtore and eſtabliſh the other: and all this in order to entitle us to the favour of God, and a bleſſed eternity. I might content my ſelf with this general delineation of *illumination*: but becauſe this is a ſubject from which we cannot but reap ſo much pleaſure and advantage, as will abundantly requite whatever labour can be beſtowed upon it; I will proceed to a *fuller* diſcovery of it, if I can.

Illumination then being a *ſtate* of *knowledge*, and the *object* of this *knowledge* being *truth*, 'tis plain, that in order to form a juſt and diſtinct *notion* of *illumination*, it will be neceſſary to enquire into *two* things: *Firſt*, What kind of *truths*; and *next*, what kind of *knowledge* of theſe *truths*, conſtitutes *illumination*.

1. Of the *truths* which *illuminate:* we have many noble characters in the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, which diſtinguiſh *theſe* from *truths* of an *inferior* nature: all which are, I think, comprized by *Solomon* in very few words; *Prov* xxiv. 13, 14. *My ſon*, ſaith he, *eat thou honey, becauſe it is good; and the honey-comb, which is ſweet to thy taſte; ſo ſhall the knowledge of wiſdom be unto thy ſoul, when thou haſt found it; then there ſhall be a reward, and thy expectation ſhall not be cut off.* *Solomon* here, as is very uſual with *inſpired writers*, does compare ſpiritual with corporeal things, or illuſtrates the *one* by the *other*. He tells us, that what *honey* is to the *body*, that *wiſdom* is to the *ſoul:* and recommending the *former* from two incomparable properties, its miniſtring to *health* and *pleaſure*, he recommends the *latter* from advantages, which bear indeed ſome *reſemblance*; but are as much *ſuperior* to theſe, as the *ſoul* is to the *body*. *My ſon, eat thou honey, becauſe it is good*; i. e. becauſe

cauſe it both *cleanſes* and *purges* all noxious humours, and *nouriſhes* and *ſtrengthens* the body: *and the honey-comb, becauſe it is ſweet to the taſte*; which is the *ſecond excellence* of this ſort of *food*, namely, its *pleaſantneſs*; and properly urged to invite the eater: then, proceeding to compleat the compariſon, he adds, *ſo ſhall the knowledge of wiſdom be to thy ſoul, when thou haſt found it*; i. e. it ſhall miniſter to the *purification, ſtrength*, and *delight* of thy *ſoul*. But this is not all: tho' the parallel can be extended no further between *honey* and *wiſdom*; yet he does not think fit for that reaſon to omit one of the greateſt *excellencies* of *wiſdom*: and therefore he adds, *then there ſhall be a reward, and thy expectation ſhall not be cut off*. *Wiſdom* does not only *perfect* and *entertain* our minds; but alſo it gives us a title to thoſe *rewards*, for the enjoyment of which it prepares and fits us. Here then we have from *Solomon* the true *properties* of true *wiſdom*: by theſe we may pronounce ſafely of all the different kinds of *knowledge*; diſtinguiſhing the *precious* from the *vile*, and fixing the true *eſtimate* of *each*. If there be any ſort of *truths*, whoſe *knowledge* does not promote, but *obſtruct* theſe great ends, *theſe* we are to deſpiſe and ſlight, to *ſhun* and *hate*. But if there be any *knowledge*, that does *neither* oppoſe or hinder, *nor* yet contribute

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to theſe ends, unleſs accidentally, and very remotely; for *this* we may have *ſome*, but *no* very *great* regard or eſteem. But whatever *knowledge* that be which is attended by theſe *fruits*, *this* is that which we are *to ſearch for as for hidden treaſure*: this is that which, when we have found it, we are to value above *the gold of Ophir*, *the Topaz*, and *the carbuncle*, and *all precious ſtones*. The diſtinguiſhing *characters* then of *illuminating truths* are *four*.

1. They *purify* us.
2. They *nouriſh* and *ſtrengthen* us.
3. They *entertain* and *delight* us.
4. They procure us a glorious *reward*.

1. They *purify* us. This is a *property* which the *royal Pſalmiſt* frequently attributes to the *word of God*, that it is *pure* and *clean*, Pſal. cxix. and elſewhere. And the *New Teſtament* frequently aſcribes to *faith* and *hope*, that they *purify* the heart, 1 *John* iii. 3. *Acts* xv. And this ſure is the firſt thing neceſſary to the *perfecting* the ſoul of man. 'Tis with the *ſoul*, as with the *body*; it muſt be firſt *cleanſed* from hurtful humours, before it can be *fed* and *nouriſhed*; *purged* of its errors and vices, ere it can be *enriched* with divine virtues, and *attain* that liberty and ſtrength,

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wherein consists the true greatness and excellence of the mind of man. The *first step* towards the *Perfection* of *virtue*, is the *relinquishing* our *vice*; for *we must cease to do evil, ere we can learn to do good:* and the *first step* towards the *Perfection* of *wisdom*, is the *dispelling* those *errors*, which deceive and mislead the mind, and pervert life. *What* these were in the *Jew* and *Gentiles*, and what they are at *this* day in *us*, it is easy enough to discern. The *mind* of man, as far as I can observe, is naturally *prone* to *Religious* worship. Not only the consideration of the wonderful mechanism and contrivance of the *world*, and of *events*, strange, sudden, and unaccountable; but also the conscience of his own *impotence* and *obnoxiousness*, inclining him to the belief, and prompting him to seek the patronage of an *invisible all-sufficient* power. In the next place, the mind of *man* is ever prone to propose to him some great, some soveraign *good*; in which he may acquiesce, and by which he may secure himself as well as he can, against the indigence and poverty of his *nature*, and the changes and revolutions, the disasters and the miseries, to which this *mortal state* is exposed. These are two things of that importance, that no man can err in them, but the error must prove fatal to his repose. He that sets up to himself for

for his ultimate end, an *empty* and *uncertain good*, inſtead of a *ſolid* and *eternal* one, muſt needs be as miſerably deluded and diſappointed, as *he* muſt, who ſets up to himſelf a *falſe God* inſtead of the *true*; or goes about to endear and recommend himſelf to the *true*, by a *falſe* and *ſuperſtitious* worſhip. Now in theſe points the *Jew* and *Gentile* were *miſerably*, though not *equally*, miſtaken. The *Gentile* worſhipped *devils*, inſtead of *God:* their *myſteries* were either ſenſual or cruel; their *religion* did oftner encourage ſin than virtue. And as to their ſoveraign *good*, their hearts were ſet upon *this world*, upon the pomp and pleaſure, upon the eaſe and honour of it; and they had either none, or very dark and uncertain proſpects beyond the *grave:* all beyond it was an unknown region, full of fables and idle phantoms. The *Jews*, though they enjoyed the *oracles of God*, and generally preſerved the worſhip of one *true* and *living God*, yet were they not free from very deplorable errors relating to theſe points: they ſeemed to have turned the *true God* into an *idol*, and to have entertained ſome *notions* of *him* very repugnant to *his nature:* they looked upon him as *the God of the Jews, not of the Gentiles*; as a *reſpecter of perſons*, as fond and *partial* to the nation; and as delighted with a religion, made up of nume-

numerous *rites* and *ceremonies*, and *external* obſervances. And this could not but have a very ſad influence upon their *religion*, as it really had: the *holineſs* which is truly acceptable to God, being neglected and aboliſhed; and *Sadduciſm* or *Phariſaiſm*, i. e. *ſenſuality* or *hypocriſy*, introduced in the room of it. And as to their ultimate *end* or ſupreme *good*, the *Sadducees* denied the *reſurrection*, *angels*, and *ſpirits*; and therefore 'tis not to be expected they ſhould entertain any deſign above the pleaſure of the *body*. And though the *Phariſees* acknowledged *angels* and a *reſurrection*; yet can we not diſcern that they had a real value for any thing beſides the honour, power, and wealth of this *world*. And no wonder, ſince they could, upon their *principles*, ſatisfy themſelves in a *religion* which had nothing of internal *purity* or ſolid *righteouſneſs* in it. So that upon the whole, the *Jew* and *Gentile* were alike wicked: only the wickedneſs of the *Jews* had this *aggravation* in it above that of the *Gentiles*, that they enjoyed the *oracles of God*, and the favour of a peculiar *covenant*. This being the ſtate of *darkneſs*, which lay upon the face of the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* world, our *Lord*, who was to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Iſrael*, advanced and eſtabliſhed in the world that doctrine, which directly

directly tends to diſpel theſe errors, and reſcue mankind from the miſery that attends them. For all that the *goſpel* contains may be reduced to theſe *three* heads: *firſt*, the aſſertion of *one* only true *God*, with a bright and full *revelation* of his divine *Attributes* and *Perfection*. *Secondly*, an account of the *will of God*, or the *worſhip* he delights in, which is a *ſpiritual* one, together with ſuitable *means* and *motives*; in which laſt is contained a full *declaration* of *man's* ſupreme *happineſs*. *Thirdly*, the *revelation* of *one Mediator between God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus; through whom we have acceſs with boldneſs to the throne of grace; through whom we have obtained from the Father, grace, and pardon, and adoption*; and through whom, *laſtly*, all our oblations and performances are *acceptable* to him. The *deſign* of this glorious manifeſtation was to *open* mens *eyes*, to *turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God: that they might obtain remiſſion of ſins*, and an *inheritance of glory*. Theſe then are the *truths* which *illuminated* the *Gentile* and *Jewiſh* world: and theſe are the *truths* which muſt *illuminate us* at *this* day. Theſe diſpel all deſtructive *errors* that lead us to vice or miſery: Theſe point out our ſupreme *felicity*, and the direct *way* to it: theſe open and enlarge the

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eye of the *ſoul*, enable it to diſtinguiſh and judge with an unerring *exactneſs* between *good* and *evil*, between *ſubſtantial* and *ſuperficial*, *temporal* and *eternal* good. And I wiſh from my ſoul, whatever *light* we pretend to at *this day*, we were well grounded and eſtabliſhed in *theſe truths*. I doubt notwithſtanding our *belief* of *one God*, and *one Mediator*; and notwithſtanding we are well enough aſſured, that *God*, who is a *ſpirit*, *muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth*; and notwithſtanding our pretending to believe a *life to come*; I ſay, I am afraid, that notwithſtanding theſe things, we do generally err in *two* main points; namely, in the *notion* we ought to have of *religion*, and the *value* we are to ſet upon the *world* and the *body*. For who, that reflects upon the pomp and *pride* of *life*, upon the eaſe, the ſoftneſs and the luxury of it, upon the frothineſs and the freedom, the vanity and impertinence, to ſay no worſe, of *converſation*, will not conclude, that either we have renounced our *religion*, or form to our ſelves too complaiſant and indulgent a *notion* of it? for is *this* the imitation of *Jeſus*? is this to walk as *he* walked in the world? can this be the deportment of men to whom the world and the body is crucified? can ſuch a life as this is flow from thoſe divine fountains, *faith*, *love*, and *hope*? *who*

again

again can reflect upon the paſſion we diſcover for *ſuperiority* and *precedence*, our thirſt of *power*, or ravenous deſire of *wealth*, and not conclude, that we have *miſtaken* our main *end*, that we ſet a wrong *value* upon *things*; and that whatever we talk of an *eternity*, we look upon this *preſent* world as our *portion*, and moſt valuable *good?* for can ſuch a tender concern for, ſuch an eager purſuit after, *temporal* things, flow from, nay conſiſt with, *purity of heart*, and *poverty of ſpirit*, the *love of God*, and a *deſire of heaven?* Whoever then will be *perfect* or *happy*, muſt carefully avoid both theſe *errors:* he muſt never think that *religion* can ſubſiſt, without the ſtrength and vigour of our *affections:* or, that the bent and vigour of our *ſouls* can be pointed towards *God*, and yet the *air* of our *deportment* and *converſation* be earthly, ſenſual, and vain, conformed even to a *pagan pride*, and *ſhew* of *life*. *Next*, he muſt never cheriſh in himſelf the love of *this world:* he muſt never look upon himſelf other than a *ſtranger and pilgrim* in it: he muſt never be fond of the *pleaſure* of it: he muſt never form vain *deſigns* and *projects* about it; nor look upon the beſt things in it, as *ingredients* of our *happineſs*, but only as *inſtruments* of *virtue*, or ſhort *repaſts* and *refreſhments* in our journey. And becauſe all our *miſtakes* about the *nature*

ture and *Perfection* of *religion*, and the *value* of *temporal* things do generally arise from εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτία. that *peculiar* sin to which our *constitution* betrays us; therefore the *knowledge* of *our selves*, an intimate *acquaintance* with all our natural *propensions* and *infirmities*, is no inconsiderable part of *illumination*. For we shall never address our selves heartily to the *cure* of a *disease* which we know *nothing* of, or to the *rectifying* any *inclination*, till we are thoroughly convinced that 'tis *irregular* and *dangerous*.

2. The *second* character of *illuminating truths* is, that they are such as *feed* and *nourish*, *corroborate* and *improve* the mind of man. Now the properties of *bodily* strength are such as these: it enables us to baffle and repel injuries, to bear toil and travel, to perform difficult works with speed and ease; and finally, it prolongs life to a much further date, than weak and crazy constitutions can arrive at. And of all these we find some *resemblances* in *spiritual strength*; but as much more *perfect* and *excellent*, as the *spirit* is above the *body*. *These truths* then are indeed *illuminating*, which enable us to vanquish *temptations*, to *endure* with constancy and patience the toils and hardships of our Christian *warfare*, to discharge the *duties* of our station with zeal and vigour; and

which, laſtly, render us firm, ſteddy, and immortal. And theſe are the glorious effects which are attributed to the *truths of God.* Hence is the *goſpel* called the *power of God unto ſalvation*, Rom. i. 16. And hence it is, that we read of the *armour of God*, Epheſ. vi. 11. *The ſword of the ſpirit, the ſhield of faith, the breaſt-plate of righteouſneſs*, &c. to intimate to us the *ſtrength* and virtue of the *word of God*, and that it brings with it ſafety and ſucceſs. And hence it is, that the *word of God* is ſaid to *quicken* and *ſtrengthen*; that *man* is ſaid *to live, not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; that *righteouſneſs* is called *everlaſting*; and that he that *doth the will of God* is affirmed to *abide for ever:* to teach us plainly, that there is nothing ſteddy and unalterable, nothing durable, nothing eternal, but *God, divine truths*, and *thoſe* that are *formed* and *moulded* by them.

There are *truths* indeed which are merely *barren* and *unactive*, which amuſe and ſuſpend the mind, but never benefit it: but there are *others* which are, in the language of *Solomon*, like *health to the navel, and marrow to the bones:* wiſdom and virtue, life and honour, the favour of God and man, attend them where'er they dwell. And theſe are the *truths* which *illuminate:* truths that are active and fruitful; that make us wiſe

wiſe and good, perfect and happy: ſuch as we have a mighty intereſt in, ſuch as have a ſtrong influence upon us, ſuch as give a new *day* to the underſtanding, and new ſtrength and liberty to the will; ſuch as raiſe and exalt our affections, and render the whole man more rational, more ſteddy, more conſtant, more uniform. *Theſe* are the *truths* which make men great and modeſt in proſperity, erect and couragious in adverſity; always content with *this* world, yet always full of the hopes of a *better*: ſerene, calm, and well aſſured in the *preſent* ſtate of their ſouls, and yet thirſting after *Perfection*, *maturity*, and the abſolute *conſummation* of righteouſneſs in the *world to come*. Now the *truths* that effect all this, are all reducible to thoſe which I have mentioned under the former head: for in thoſe we find all that is *neceſſary to life an godlineſs*, to *virtue* and *glory*; in thoſe we find all that is neceſſary to raiſe and ſupport true *magnanimity*, to enlarge and free the mind, and to add ſtrength and courage to it. For what can more certainly promote all this, than *immortality* and *glory?* what can be a ſurer foundation for the hope of both to reſt on, than the favour of *God* himſelf? and what can more effectually reconcile and ingratiate us with *God*, than ſincere univerſal *righteouſneſs*, and the *mediation* of his dearly beloved *Son?*

3. The *third* character of *illuminating truths*, is, that they are *pleaſant* and *agreeable* to the ſoul. Hence it is, that the *royal Pſalmiſt* pronounces the *word of God ſweeter than the honey and the honey-comb:* that he aſcribes to it *delight* and *joy*; for he tells us, that *it rejoices the heart*, that *it enlightens the eyes.* And accordingly we find the true ſervants of God, not only continually bleſſing and praying God in the *temple*; but magnifying him by *Pſalms* and *Hymns* in their *priſons*, and *rejoicing* in the midſt of *tirbulation.* But when I reckon *pleaſure* and *delight* amongſt the *fruits* of *Illumination*, I muſt add, that there is a vaſt difference between the *fits* and *flaſhes* of *mirth*, and the ſerenity of a *fixed* and *habitual delight*; between the *titillations* of *ſenſe*, and the ſolid *joys* of the *mind*; and laſtly, between the *pleaſures* of *fancy*, and of *reaſon.* And when I ſay, *Illumination* conſiſts in the *knowledge* of *pleaſant* and *agreeable truths*, I mean it of *rational* pleaſure, an *habitual* tranquillity of the mind; and then the matter is beyond queſtion. Whatever *truths* do contribute to promote *this*, the ſtudy and contemplation of *them* muſt be our true *wiſdom.* Joy, when 'tis ſolid and rational, does enlarge and exalt the mind of man: 'tis as it were, *health to the navel, and marrow to the bones*; it renders us more thankful

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to God, more kind and courteous to man. 'Tis an excellent *preparation* to invite more *plentiful* influxes of the *Spirit of God.* Hence did *Elijah* call for a *muſical inſtrument* when he deſired to *propheſy:* and we find the company of *prophets* rejoycing with *hymns*, *muſick*, and *dances*; all *outward* teſtimonies of the *inward* tranſports and raviſhments of their *minds.* And as I am perſwaded that that which diſtinguiſhes a *godly* ſorrow, from a *worldly* or *impious* one, *repentance* and *contrition*, from the agonies and perplexities of *deſpair*, is the *peace* and *tranquillity* which attends it; ſo am I perſwaded, that *God* does preſs and invite us to *mourning* and *ſorrow* for *ſin*, for *this* reaſon, not excluding *others*, becauſe it naturally leads on to *peace* and *joy:* a ſoft and tender *ſorrow* diſſipating the fears and diſtreſſes of *guilt*, like mild and fruitful *ſhowers* that do lay *ſtorms.* In a word, there is no ſuch powerful antidote againſt *ſin*, nor ſpur to holy *induſtry*, as holy *pleaſure*, pious *joy*, or ſpiritual *peace* and *tranquillity.* This is a partaking or anticipating the *powers of the world to come*; and the mightieſt corroboration of every thing that is good in us. The ſtudy then of *ſuch truths*, is true *wiſdom.* And *Illumination* thus far will conſiſt in quitting thoſe *errors* which beget melancholy, ſuperſtition, deſperation; and in ſuch *truths*,

as enlarge our view of the divine Perfections, and exhibit to us a nearer presence of his goodness and glory: *such*, again, as unfold the dignity of human nature, and the wise and gracious ends of our creation: *such*, lastly, as extend our prospect, and enlarge our hopes; support our frailties, and excite our vigour.

4. The *last property* of those *truths* in the knowledge of which *Illumination* consists, is, that they are such as procure us a *reward*. If we reflect upon those *three* heads, under which I ranged those *truths*, which *illuminated* the *Gentiles* and *Jewish* world, we shall easily discern how well they fit this character: they fill the mind with *joy* and *peace*, and make it abound in *hope*; they purge the man from his natural corruption, and fortify the mind against such impressions, from outward good or evil in this world, as disquiet and torment the sinner; they procure him the protection of God's providence, and the assistance of his spirit in *this* life, and they invite him to hope for glories and pleasures in *another*, far above any thing that *the heart of man can conceive*. *God* is *the God of hope*; he has all *fulness* and *sufficiency in himself*: and therefore *blessed* must all *they be*, *who have the Lord for their God*. *Jesus* is the fountain of all *consolation*: *He is made unto us of God, wisdom and*

and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption: happy is he that does *rejoice* always, and *glory* in *him*. *Righteouſneſs* is a ſtate of *health* and *ſtrength*, of *Perfection* and *beauty*, of *peace* and *tranquillity*, of *reſt* and *hope*: *bleſſed* are they who are poſſeſſed of it, who are made *free from ſin, and become ſervants of God*; who *have their fruits unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life*. Such are already *paſs'd from death to life*; for *the ſpirit of life and holineſs, of God and glory, reſts upon them*. This is the character that diſtinguiſhes *goſpel* knowledge from all *other* ſorts of knowledge. No knowledge of *arts* or *ſciences*, and much leſs the moſt exquiſite knowledge of all the *myſteries* of the *kingdom of darkneſs*, can pretend to an eternal *reward*. A ſhort and impure *pleaſure*, and a tranſient *intereſt*, is all that *this* ſort of *knowledge* can beſtow, and very often, inſtead of *pleaſure* and *profit*, it requites its diſciples with *pain* and *trouble*. The *goſpel* only contains thoſe *truths*, which confer *life and immortality* on thoſe that believe and obey them. 'Tis the *goſpel* alone that teaches us how we are to gain the love and favour of *God*; and 'tis *God* alone who *rules* and *governs* the viſible and inviſible *world*. He therefore alone is to be *feared*; and *he* alone is to be *loved*. *Fear not them*, ſaith our Saviour, *Matth.*

x. 28. *which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul; but rather fear him who is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell.* And St. *John* gives the *ſame precept* concerning the *world: Love not the world, neither the things of the world:* and backs it by the ſame reaſon; *for the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.* That is, the *world* can at beſt but gratify for a *moment* the appetites of the *body*, or the deſires of a ſenſual *fancy*; therefore *love* it *not*; but *love* the *Father*, who, after the diſſolution of the vital union betwixt *ſoul* and *body*, is able to confer *life* and *happineſs* on *both* to all *eternity*.

Thus I have conſidered the *characters* of *illuminating truths*. And the *whole* of what I have ſaid amounts to theſe *two* things. 1. There are *truths* of very *different* kinds: *truths* that are of *no uſe*; ſuch are thoſe which are either *trifling* or merely *notional*, and can have no influence on human life: *truths* that are of *ill uſe*; ſuch are thoſe of which conſiſts the arts of *ſenſuality*, *avarice*, *vanity*, and *ambition*: *theſe* are to be *deteſted*, the *former* to be *contemned* by all that ſeek after true *wiſdom*. *Again*, there are *truths* of an *inferior uſe*; ſuch as concern our *fortunes*, our *relations*, our *bodies*; and theſe may be allowed their *proper place*, and a *reaſonable value*.

But

But the *truths* which concern the peace and pleaſure, ſtrength and liberty of our *ſouls*; which procure us the *favour* of *God*, and the *grace* of his *ſpirit*; the *truths*, in a word, which ſecure our *temporal* and *eternal* happineſs; theſe are *illuminating truths*, theſe have a *tranſcendent* worth, and *ineſtimable* excellence, or uſefulneſs, and conſequently can never be too *dear* to us. 2. Since the great *characters* of *illuminating truths* do exactly *fit* the *goſpel of Jeſus*, 'tis plain, that *this* is that *ſyſtem of knowledge*, which we are to *ſtudy day and night*; *this* is that *divine philoſophy*, whoſe *principles* and *laws* we muſt inceſſantly revolve and ponder. 'Tis not without reaſon, that the *Pſalmiſt* beſtows ſuch glorious *elogies* upon the *word of God*, Pſal. xix. and elſewhere: that he magnifies one while the intrinſick excellence and beauty, another while the force and efficacy of it; and ever and anon enlarges himſelf upon the advantages, the unſpeakable advantages which reward the meditation and practice of it. *Of all Perfections I have ſeen an end; but thy commandments are exceeding broad. They are pure, they endure for ever; they enlighten the eyes, and rejoice the heart. Moreover by them thy ſervant is warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.* That is, by them we are preſerved from all *real evil*, and put in poſſeſſion

poſſeſſion of, or entitled to all *real good.* How well did St. *Peter* anſwer, when our *Lord* asked his diſciples, *will ye alſo go from me? Lord, whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life.* And how wiſely did St. *Paul* reſolve, *to know nothing but Chriſt Jeſus and him crucified? For he is the way, the truth, and the life*; and in *him are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge.*

But after all, as there is a *form of godlineſs*, ſo there is a *form of knowledge*, without the *power* of it. The knowledge of the *ſame truths*, as I obſerved in the beginning, in *different perſons*, may be very *different*, as meeting with a very *different reception.* Our *conceptions* may be more clear or confuſed, more lively or faint, more perfect or maimed: and our *aſſent* may be ſtronger or weaker. In ſome they may only float ſuperficially, in *others* they may penetrate deeper: and the degrees of their *influence* and *operation* will be certainly proportioned to the different manner of their *reception.* For this reaſon it will be neceſſary to the right underſtanding of a *ſtate* of *illumination*, to diſcourſe,

2. Of the *nature* of that *knowledge* we muſt have of the *former truths*; to ſhew, *what* ſort of *conception* we muſt form of them, and what kind of *aſſent* we muſt pay them, and what kind of *conſideration* we muſt employ about them. As I have there-

fore

fore laid down the *properties* of those *truths*, so will I now lay down the *properties* of that *knowledge of them*, which is essential to *illumination*.

1. *Illuminating knowledge* must be deeply *rooted*. This our *Saviour* has taught us in that *parable*, wherein he has observed to us, that the *seed which had not depth of earth*, as it *soon sprang up*, so it *soon withered* and *dried away*. We often know (or pretend to do so) the *rudiments* of our *religion*, without the *grounds* and *foundation* of it. We embrace *conclusions*, without examining the *principles* from whence they flow; and contrary to the advice of the *apostle*, we are *unable to give a reason to any one that asketh us of the faith, and the hope that is in us*. And then *ours* is not properly *knowledge*, but *opinion*; 'tis not *faith* but *credulity*: 'tis not a firm *persuasion*, but an *easy customary* assent. And this is overthrown by every *temptation*; defaced or much blurred by every *atheistical suggestion* or *prophane objection*. Does the *world* or our *lust* tempt us, as the *devil* did our *first parents*, *ye shall not surely die*? How easily is that *faith* shaken, which is *no better founded*? How easily is a man induced to hope, that *sin* is not very *fatal* and *pernicious*, that *God* will easily be prevailed with to *pardon* it, that the *flames of hell* are *metaphorical*, and its *eternity* a *mistaken* notion and *groundless* fancy,

fancy, if he be ignorant of the true *reaſons of God's wrath* and *indignation*, which are founded in the very *nature of God* and *ſin?* Whereas on the *other* hand, he that well underſtands *both* theſe; the deformity and tendency of ſin, and the holineſs and the purity of the divine Nature, cannot but *diſcern* an irreconcileable *oppoſition* between them; and be convinced, that were there *no tribunal* erected for the *ſinner*, yet would *ſin* be its *own puniſhment*; and that an intolerable *hell*, conſiſting in the *diſorder of nature*, an *excluſion from God*, &c. would be the natural and neceſſary *iſſue* of it. The *ſum* of this argument *is*, *that knowledge*, which has no deep *root*, is ſubject to be overthrown by every *blaſt*: *that faith* which is little more than *credulity*, does very ſeldom ſtand againſt any very rude *ſhock*. Now the *grounds* of our *faith* and *duty* are fully and clearly expounded in the *goſpel*: and *here* eſpecially we muſt *ſeek* them. When I ſay *this*, I reject no *collateral* arguments, I refuſe no *foreign* aids, which contribute any thing to *confirm* and *fortify* our belief of *goſpel truths*. The *faith* of St. *Thomas* did, in part at leaſt, depend upon the evidence of *ſenſe*, *Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen thou haſt believed*, John xx. 29. And ſo did that of the *reſt* of them, who were *eye-witneſſes* of the

the *reſurrection* and *aſcenſion* of the *bleſſed Jeſus.* The *doctrine* of *one God*, and a *judgment to come*, may receive much *light* and *ſtrength* from *natural reaſon:* and whatever *eſtabliſhes* a *revealed truth*, will be ſo far from diminiſhing, that it will increaſe the *virtue* and *efficacy* of it. All the *caution* I think fit to give here is, that we be ſure that the ground be plain and firm, on which we build the belief of an *illuminating truth. Philoſophy*, in many caſes is clear and convictive: St. *Paul* himſelf amongſt the *Gentiles* frequently appeals to *reaſon.* But too often we call our *fancy philoſophy*; and obtrude upon the world, the wild and undigeſted *theories* of a warm and confident *imagination*, for new *diſcoveries.* What ſtrange *ſtuff* was *Gnoſtick philoſophy once?* What did it produce but the *corruption* of the *Chriſtian faith?* And what can be expected from *myſtick*, *euthnſiaſtick philoſophy* or *divinity* in *any* age, any man may gueſs, without any deep penetration. Nor do I doubt but that all judicious and experienced men, do as much deſpiſe and nauſeate the blendures and mixtures of pretended *philoſophy* with our *faith* and *morals*, as the world generally does the *ſubtilties* and *perplexities* of the *ſchools.* For my part, I can't endure to have my *religion* lean upon the rotten *props* of *precarious* notions. I admire, I love the *elevations*

various and *enlargements* of soul: but I can have no value for unaccountable *amusements* or *rambles* of *fancy*. An itch of *novelty* or *curiosity* has a tincture in it of our *original corruption*. I ever suspect an *opinion* that carries an *air* of *novelty* in it; and does always prefer a *vulgar truth* before *refined error*. They are *vulgar truths*, which like *vulgar blessings*, are of *most use*, and *truest worth*: and surely our *Saviour* thought so, when he *thanked his Father, that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes*. And when he himself taught the people *with power and authority, and not as the scribes*, he did advance no subtil *theories*, but bright and dazling, useful and convictive *truths*. This minds me of another *property* of *illuminating knowledge*.

2. This *knowledge* must not be obscure and confused, but *distinct* and *clear*. Where the images of things are slight, faint, and vanishing, they move men but very weakly, and affect them but very coldly; especially in such matters as are not subject to our senses. And this I persuade my self is one chief *reason why* those glorious and wonderful *objects*, *God*, a *judgment to come*, *heaven*, and *hell*, do strike us so *feebly*, and operate so little. We have generally no lively, distinct, and clear *conception* of them: It being otherwise impossible, that things

in

in their own *nature dreadful* and *amazing*, ſhould excite in us *no fear*; or that things in their own *nature* infinitely *amiable*, ſhould inkindle in us *no paſſion*, *no deſire*. The *notions* we have of *ſpiritual* and *inviſible* things are *dim*, *duſky*, and *imperfect*: our *thoughts* paſs over them ſo *ſlightly*, that they ſcarce retain any *print* or *traces* of them. Now this ſort of *knowledge* will never do the work. Theſe drowſy notices of things will never ferment and raiſe our *paſſions* for *heaven* high enough to confront and combat thoſe we have for the *world*. From hence we may give a fair account, what the uſe is of *prophetick retirement*, and *prophetick eloquence*: what is the purpoſe of all thoſe *ſchemes* and *tropes* which occur in *inſpired writings*: and why the beſt of men have ever ſo much affected *ſolitude* and *retreats*, from the noiſe and the hurry of the world. Serious, frequent, and devout *contemplation* is neceſſary to form in our minds, clear, diſtinct, and ſprightly *notions*: and to *communicate* theſe well to the world, they muſt be expreſſed in *moving* language, in *living* tropes and figures. Ah! did we but conſider this, we ſhould ſure allot more *time* to the *ſtudy* of *divine truths*; and we ſhould not think, that to diſcover them *throughly*, it were enough to let our thoughts *glance* upon them. But we ſhould ſurvey and

and ponder them with all the *exactneſs* and *diligence* that were neceſſary to make laſting and diſtinct *impreſſions* upon us. Could we know by *intuition*, doubtleſs wonderful *objects* would raiſe very extraordinary *paſſions* in us. But this we cannot, let us come as near it as we can: only let us avoid forming *abſurd* and *falſe* notions of things, whilſt we endeavour after *diſtinct* and *clear* ones. *Spiritual* things do not anſwer *corporeal*, like *face* to *face* in a glaſs: and therefore, tho' to give ſome light to things that are *above* us, we may find out all the *reſemblances* of them we can in *thoſe* things we are acquainted with *here below*; yet we muſt ſtill remember, that the *one* do vaſtly exceed the *other*, and that we cannot thus get a juſt adequate *notion* of them.

3. This *knowledge* muſt not lie in the underſtanding, *crude* and *undigeſted*; but it muſt be throughly *concocted* and turned into *nouriſhment*, *blood*, and *ſpirits*. We muſt know the true *value* and *uſe* of every *principle*, of every *truth*; and be able readily to *apply* them. For what does it ſignify, how important *truths* are in themſelves, if they are not ſo to me? What does it avail that they are impregnated with *life* and *power*, if I *feel* not any ſuch influence? Of what uſe is the knowledge of *goſpel-promiſes* to *me*, if I reap no *comfort* from them?

Or

Or the knowledge of *goſpel-threats*, if they are unable to *curb* and *reſtrain* my paſſions? And ſo is it with other *truths*: what will it avail me that I *know*, the *life of man conſiſts not in the multitude of the things which he poſſeſſes*, if notwithſtanding I *cannot content* my ſelf with a *competency*? That *righteouſneſs* is the chief *good*, and the richeſt *treaſure* of the ſoul of man; if notwithſtanding I ſeek *this world*, and the *things* of it, with a more *early* and *paſſionate* concern? That *ſin* and *pain* are the moſt *conſiderable*, if not *only*, *evils* of man; if notwithſtanding I be *caſt down* and *broken* under every *adverſity*? And thus I might go on, and ſhew you, that the *knowledge* which is not digeſted into *nouriſhment* is, if not a burden, of no benefit to us. 'Tis plain, *that* is to *me* nothing worth, which I make *no uſe* of. We muſt then follow the advice of *Solomon*, and never quit the ſearch and meditation of *truth*, till we grow *intimate* and *familiar* with it; and ſo have it always ready for a *guide* and *guard* for our *ſupport* and *ſtrength*, and for our *delight* and *pleaſure*. We muſt *bind it about our heart*, as he ſpeaks, *and tie it as an ornament about our neck. Then, when we go forth it ſhall lead us, when we ſleep it ſhall keep us, and when we awake it ſhall talk with us: for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of inſtruction are the way of life*, Prov.

vi. In a word, nothing can render the most important *truths* powerful and operative in us, but such a *digestion* of them by serious and devout *meditation*, as may in a manner *incorporate* them with us. And this the *scripture* plainly teaches, when to signify the force and virtue of the *gospel* above that of the *law*, it uses these words: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts*, Heb. viii. 10. intimating, that no *laws*, no *principles* can ever influence us, till they be deeply *imprinted* in our hearts.

To *wind up* all. There are *several* kinds of *knowledge* of the *same truths*: there is a *knowledge*, which serves us only as *Pisga*'s top did *Moses*; to *shew* us *Canaan*, but not to *bring us* into it. There is again a *knowledge*, which serves us only as the *talent* did the *wicked servants*; not to procure *rewards*, but *punishments*. And finally, there is a *knowledge*, which like the *talents* in the hand of the *faithful* and *good steward*, *inriches* us *first*, and *recommends* us *afterwards* to *higher* trusts and dignities; which *improves* and *perfects* our *nature* first, and then puts us into *possession* of such *blessings*, as only *nature* thus *improved* and *perfected* is capable of. And this *knowledge* must not be a slight, superficial, and undigested one; it

it must not be a confused and obscure, a weak and imperfect one: *this* is *not the knowledge* which will bring forth those excellent *fruits*, which we have reason to expect from true *illumination*. But it must be a *knowledge* that has all the quite *contrary* characters: even such as I have *before* described at large. That *this* is an *observation* of the greatest weight and moment, is *evident* to any one who will give himself leave to make any *reflection* on the *present* state of *Christianity*. For how does the power of *darkness* prevail amidst the *light* of the gospel? How has the *devil* erected *his throne* in the midst of that *Church*, which should be the *kingdom of God?* and sin and death *reign* where life and immortality are *preached? Whence* is this? Are men *ignorant* of those *truths* which make up the system of true *wisdom? This* is *not* easy to be *imagined*; scarcely of the darkest corners of the *popish* churches, much less of *ours*. And therefore we must conclude, that this is because our *knowledge* is not *such* as it *ought* to be, with respect to its *clearness*, *certainty*, and *digestion*.

CHAP. II.

Of the fruits *and* attainment *of illumination. That illumination does not depend so much upon a man's* outward fortune, extraordinary *parts*, acquired learning, *&c. as upon his moral* qualifications, *such as* humility, impartiality, *and love* of the truth. 4. *Directions for the attainment of illumination.* 1. *That we do not suffer our minds to be engaged in quest of knowledge* foreign *to our purpose.* 2. *That we apply our selves with a very tender and sensible concern to the study of illuminating truths.* 3. *That we act conformable to those* measures *of light which we have attained.* 4. *That we frequently address our selves to God by* prayer *for the illumination of his grace. The chapter concluded with a prayer of* Fulgentius.

HAving dispatched the *notion* of *illumination* in the foregoing *chapter*, and shewed both what *truths*, and what sort of *knowledge* of them is requisite to it; I am next to treat,

1. Of the *fruits:* and,
2. Of the *attainment* of it.

§. 1. As to the *fruits* of *illumination* I have the less need to insist upon *them* because whatever can be said on *this* head, has been

been in a manner *anticipated:* all the characters of *illuminating truths* and *illuminating knowledge* being such as sufficiently declare the blessed *effects* of *true illumination.* I will therefore be very *short* on *this head*; and only just *mention two advantages* of *illumination.* As the use of *light* is especially *twofold,* to *delight* and *guide* us; so do we reap *two benefits* from *illumination.*

1. The *first* and most immediate one is, that it *sets* the whole man, and the whole life *right*; that it fixes our *affections* on their proper and natural *object,* and directs all our *actions* to their true *end.* I do not mean, that the *understanding* constantly and necessarily *influences* and *determines* the *will.* *Experience* tells us, that we have a *fatal liberty:* that our *affections* are too often *independant* of our *reason*; that we *sin* against the dictates of *conscience*; that we pursue *false pleasure,* and a *false interest,* in opposition to the *true,* and in plain *opposition* to our *judgment* too; at least to a *sedate* and *calm* one. And the *reason* of all this is, because we consist of *two* different and repugnant *principles,* a *body* and a *soul:* and are sollicited by *two* different *worlds,* a *temporal* and an *eternal* one. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain that *illumination* in the mind has a mighty influence upon us: for it is continually exciting in us wise *desires* and excellent *purposes:* 'Tis always

alluring and inviting us towards our ſoveraign *good*, and reſtraining and deterring us from *ſin* and *death*: it alarms, diſquiets, diſturbs, and perſecutes us as often as we err and wander from the path of life. In one word, the great *work* of *illumination* is, to be always repreſenting the beauties and pleaſures, and the beatitude and glory of *virtue*; and remonſtrating the evils and diſhonours, the deformities and dangers of *vice*: ſo that a man will never be at *reſt*, who has this *light* within him, till it be either *extinguiſhed* or *obeyed*.

2. This *light* within us, if it be followed and complied with, not muddied and diſturbed; if it be not quenched and extinguiſhed by wilful ſin, or unpardonable oſcitancy and remiſneſs; if, in a word, its influence be not interrupted, diſperſes all our *fears* as well as *errors*, creates an unſpeakable *tranquillity* in the ſoul, ſpreads over us a calm and glorious *ſky*, and makes every thing in us and about us look *gay*, and *verdant*, and *beautiful*. The *diſſipation* of *Pagan darkneſs*, and all participation or reſemblances of it; *deliverance* from a ſtate of *bondage* and *wrath*, the *peace of God*, the *love of Jeſus*, the *fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt*, the *immortality of the ſoul*, the *reſurrection of the body*, the *perfection* and *bleſſedneſs* of *eternity*. *Good God! what* ſurprizing, what raviſhing *themes* are theſe for the thoughts

thoughts of an *enlightened* soul to dwell upon! blessed and happy is he who enjoys this *pleasure* upon earth. And that *we may*, I am now to discourse,

§. 2. Of the *attainment* of *illumination*. Now whatever advice can relate to *this*, may be reduced under *two* heads:

1. *What qualifications* do render man *capable* of *illumination*.
2. *What* it is that one duly qualified is to *do* in *pursuit* of it.

§. 1. To begin with the *qualifications* requisite to *illumination*. *One* man is distinguished from *another* several ways: by his *estate* or *fortune*; by *natural* or *acquired endowments*, and by *moral dispositions*: and each of these may have some, tho' a very different influence upon human *Perfection*. For if we inquire after only the *essence* and *integrity of Perfection*; then are there *two* or *three moral qualifications*, which are all that is required in order to this: but if we inquire after the *largeness* of its stature, the *symmetry* of its features, the *lustre* of its complexion, and the *elegance* of its dress; then may we allow something to be ascribed to *fortune*, to *nature*, and a liberal *education*. This is an *observation* very *necessary* to be made. For tho' *every* man may be

capable of *Perfection*, that is, *habitual holiness*, if it be not his own fault; yet is not *every* man capable of being *equally perfect*, because of that accidental *variety* which I have suggested, and which flows from *different gifts of God*, which depend *not* on *our selves*. This being premised; in order to prevent my being mistaken, I proceed and determine,

1. That *illumination* depends not upon a man's *outward fortune*. There are indeed *several* sorts of *knowledge*, which we can never arrive at without much *leisure* and much *expence*: and in order to support the one, and enjoy the other, it is requisite that we be masters of a *good fortune*. Hence is that *observation* of the *author of the Ecclesiasticus*, chap. xxxviii. 24. *The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that has little business shall become wise*. And therefore in the following verses, he excludes the *husbandman*, the *statuary*, the *engraver*, the *smith*, the *potter*; and all consequently whose time and mind is taken up in the *labours* of their *profession*, and in making the necessary *provision* for *life*; these, I say, he excludes from all pretensions to *wisdom*. *How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, whose talk is of bullocks*, &c. But *this* is not the *wisdom* that I am inquiring after, and which constitutes *illumation*. *That* consists not

not in the laws of our *earthly* but *heavenly* country: not in *arts* and *ſciences* which relate to the *body*, and miniſter to a *temporal* life; but in thoſe *divine truths*, which purify the *ſoul*, and miniſter to an *eternal one*: no, not in *notional improvements* of the *mind*, but in *ſpiritual* and *vital ones*. And therefore the *huſbandman* and the *artiſt*, the *mechanick* and the *trader*, are as capable of this ſort of *wiſdom*, as the man of *office*, *money*, or *quality*. There needs no *wealth* to render one *the child of light and of the day*. There is the *book of nature*; the *book of revelation*; *both* the *books of God*, *both writ* throughout with glorious *illuminating* truths: *theſe* lie wide *open* to every honeſt Chriſtian. The being and nature of God; the mediation of Jeſus, and a judgment to come; the nature and neceſſity of holineſs, are fully *revealed*, and unanſwerably *proved*. And tho' *every* honeſt man be not able to diſcover *all* the *arguments* on which they ſtand, yet may he diſcover *enough*: and what is more, he may have an *inward*, *vital*, *ſenſible* proof of them; he may *feel* the *power*, the *charms* of *holineſs*; *experiment* its *congruity* and *lovelineſs* to the *human* ſoul; and obſerve a thouſand demonſtrations of its *ſerviceableneſs* to the *honour* of God, and the *good* of *mankind*: he may have a full and convictive ſenſe of the *manifeſtation* of the *divine Perfections* in the

the great work of our *redemption*; and the excellent *tendency* of it may be ſo palpable and conſpicuous to him, as to leave no room for *doubts* or *ſcruples*. But beſides all this, there is a *voice within*, there is a *divine teacher* and *inſtructor*, which will *ever abide with him*, and *lead him into all neceſſary truths*: all which is implied in *thoſe* words of our Lord, *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of my ſelf*, John vii. 17.

2. Extraordinary *natural parts*, ſuch as ſagacity or acuteneſs of judgment, ſtrength of memory, the liveline ſs of imagination, are not neceſſary to *illumination*. The *goſpel*, as I remember, takes *no notice* of *theſe*. Such is the *beauty* of *holineſs*, that it requires rather *purity* of *heart*, than *quickneſs* of *apprehenſion*, to render us *enamoured* of it. And the very ſame thing may be ſaid of the *power* and *energy* of all *goſpel motives*, and of the *proofs* and *evidiences* too of *divine truths*. To *convince* and *affect* us, there is no need of ſagacity and penetration, but *probity* and *ſincerity*. However, I have *two* or *three reflections* to make here, which may not be unuſeful: for though *acuteneſs* and *retention*, by which I mean quickneſs in *diſcerning*, and firmneſs in *preſerving* truth, be commonly accounted *natural parts*, and generally

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are so; yet, I think, where the *one* or the *other* are most *defective*, they may be much *helped* and wonderfully *improved*. To which end I remark, *first*, That those *defects* of *understanding* or *memory*, which *some* are wont to accuse themselves of in *spiritual* things, are with more *justice* to be imputed to *want* of *concern* and *affection* for *such* things, than to any incapacity of *nature*. 'Tis plain, we easily *understand*, and easily *remember*, what we *desire* and *love*: and where-ever we follow the impulse or conduct of *strong inclinations*, we seldom fail of *excelling*. Let us therefore take care, that our *hearts* be *set* upon the *things* of *God*; and we shall soon see that our *judgment* and *memory* will no more fail us *here*, than in those *worldly interests* and *pleasures*, which we are most intent upon. *Secondly*, As to *memory*; it depends very much upon the *perspicuity*, *regularity*, and *order* of our notions. Many complain of want of *memory*, when the defect is in their *judgment*. And *others*, while they grasp at *all*, retain *nothing*. In order then to relieve this *infirmity* of *memory*, it were an excellent way to *confine* our search and *meditation* to a *few objects*, and to have these *clearly* and *methodically* handled. A *catechetical* way of expounding and asserting the *rudiments* of our faith, if done as it ought to be, is of great service to persons of *all capacities*; but

but eſpecially to thoſe of *meaner*. For *thus* they may not only be enriched with the *knowledge* of the moſt *uſeful* things, and of the *grounds* on which our obligation either to *belief* or *practice* is bottom'd; but alſo may be furniſhed with general *principles* of *reaſon*, by which that may ſteer their *judgment* in *all* caſes; and with certain *heads* of *faith* and *morals*, to which they may be able to reduce moſt of what they *read* or *hear*. *Thirdly*, 'Tis with the underſtanding as with the eye of the body: *one* ſees *further* off, and in a *fainter* light; but *another* ſees as *well* with regard to all the *uſes* of life, who yet requires that the objects ſhould be *nearer*, and the light *better*. Men of *ſlow* capacities muſt not be *daring* or *precipitate* in paſſing their *ſentence* and forming their *notions*. They muſt *examine*, whether the matters they *enquire* after be not too *remote* and *obſcure*: whether the object may be brought *nearer*, and placed in a *better light*; or whether they may be furniſhed with *teleſcopes* or *microſcopes* fit for them. If *not*, they muſt quit the ſearch of *ſuch* truths as *improper* and *unneceſſary* for *them*: by which means they will, at leaſt, avoid being *deceived* or *perplexed*; which is no ſmall *advantage*. To be enriched with a kind of *univerſal knowledge* is a *great* thing; but I doubt *too great* for *man*. *Next* to this is, to be endowed with a knowledge of *neceſſary*

and

and *important truths*; and to be *freed* from *errors* and *perplexity* in matters of any *moment*: and methinks it were no great exceſs of *modeſty* or *humility*, for *man* to be *content* with *this*.

3. There is no great need of *acquired learning* in order to true *Illumination*. Our *Saviour* did not exact of his *diſciples*, as a neceſſary preparation for his doctrine, the *knowledge* of *tongues*; the *hiſtory* of *times*, or *nature*; *logick*, *metaphyſicks*, *mathematicks*, or the like. *Theſe* indeed may be *ſerviceable* to *many* excellent *ends*: they may be great *accompliſhments* of the mind; great *ornaments* and very engaging *entertainments* of life: they may be, finally, very excellent and neceſſary *inſtruments* of, or *introductions* to *ſeveral profeſſions* or *employments*. But as to *Perfection* and *happineſs*, to *theſe* they can never be *indiſpenſably* neceſſary. A man may be excellently, habitually *good*, without more *languages* than *one*: he may be fully perſwaded of thoſe great *truths*, that will render him maſter of his paſſions, and independent of the world; that will render him eaſy and uſeful in *this* life, and glorious in *another*, though he be no *logician* nor *metaphyſician*. Yet would I not all this while be ſuppoſed to exclude the uſe of true *reaſon* and ſolid *judgment*. Tho' the *meaneſt* capacity may attain to its proper *Perfection*; that is, ſuch a meaſure of *knowledge*,

as

as may make the man truly *wise* and *happy*; yet the more *capacious* any man's *soul* is, and the more *enlarged* his *knowledge*, the more *perfect* and *happy* he.

4. The *qualifications* previously neceſſary to *Illumination*, are *two* or *three moral* ones, implied in that *infant temper* our *Saviour* required in thoſe who would be his *diſciples*. Theſe are *humility*, *impartiality*, and a *thirſt* or *love* of *truth*. *Firſt*, *Humility*. He that will be *taught of God* muſt not be *proud* or *confident* in *himſelf*. He muſt not *over-rate* his own *parts* and *capacity*; nor lean too ſtiffly to his *own underſtanding*. He muſt firmly believe, that *Illumination* is the *work of God*; and on *him* he muſt depend. He muſt confeſs the *weakneſs* of his own *faculties*, the natural *poverty* and *indigence* of his *underſtanding*; and ſo look up to *God*, who is the fountain of *wiſdom*, and giveth *grace to the humble*, *but reſiſteth the proud*. Secondly, *impartiality*, *ſincerity*, or a certain *purity* or *innocence of judgment*, if I may be allowed to ſpeak ſo. That the *underſtanding* may be *capable* of *divine light*, it muſt not be blurred and ſtained by *falſe principles*: it muſt not be byaſs'd nor influenced by any *corrupt inclinations*. Some, to prove their *impartiality* or *freedom* of judgment, abandon themſelves to the ſcrupulouſneſs of *ſcepticiſm* and a wanton itch of endleſs *diſputation* and *contradiction*. But I cannot think

think it neceſſary to our *freedom* and *impartiality*, to deny the *evidence* of our *ſenſe*; to oppoſe the *univerſal reaſon* of *mankind*; and to ſhake off all *reverence* for the *integrity* of *man*, and the *veracity of God*. No, *this* favours too much, either of *oſtentation*, or of a raw and unexperienced *affection* of new theories and ſpeculations. *He* ſecures his *freedom* ſufficiently, who guards his *reaſon* againſt the force of groundleſs *preposſeſſions*, and ſenſeleſs *modes* and *cuſtoms*; againſt the *luſts* of the *body*, and the *prejudices* of *parties*; who keeps a ſtrict eye upon the motions and tendencies of his *inferiour* nature; who admits not the dictates of a *ſingle perſon* or *party* for *Catholick reaſon*; who conſiders, that there are *revolutions* of *philoſophy* and *opinions*, as well as of *ſtates* and *kingdoms*; and *judges* well of *times* and *men*, ere he pay much deference to *authority*. But, *thirdly*, this is not all that is neceſſary to any *compleat* degree of *Illumination*. *Impartiality* is neceſſary to the firſt *dawnings* of it; but if we would have it increaſe, and diffuſe itſelf into a *perfect day* of ſpiritual *wiſdom* and *underſtanding*, we muſt *hunger and thirſt* after *truths*. An *unprejudiced* mind is neceſſary to qualify us for the firſt *rudiments* of *truth*; but we muſt be inflamed with *deſire* and *love* of it, ere we ſhall enter into the *ſanctuary* or *receſſes* of it: therefore our *Saviour* invites

to

to him *every one that thirſts*, John vii. 27. And St. *Peter* exhorts us, *as new born babes, to deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Epiſt. ii 2. And St. *Paul* imputes the damnation of *thoſe that periſh*, to *want of love of the truth*, 2 Theſſ. ii. 10. 'Tis too *trifling* to *object* here, how come we to *thirſt* after what we do not *know?* for it concerns *every* man to *enquire* what will *become* of him *for ever*; and if he be already *aſſured* that there is *another world*, and a glorious *ſalvation* to be attained, it is *natural* to *thirſt* after the *reſolution* of ſuch queſtions as *theſe*, *what* ſhall I *do* to be *ſaved? what* ſhall I *do* to inherit an *eternal life?* and ſuch is the *beauty* of *illuminating truth*, that every *glance* of it kindles in our hearts the love of it; and ſuch its *boundleſs Perfection*, that the more we *know*, the more ſtill ſhall we *deſire to know*. Having thus conſidered what *qualifies* man for *Illumination*, my *next* buſineſs is to enquire,

§. 2. *What*

§. 2. *What* one thus qualified is to *do* for the actual *attainment* of it. All the advice that I can think fit here to be given, may be reduced to *four* heads:

1. That we do not suffer our minds to be *engaged* in quest of knowledge *foreign* to our purpose.
2. That we apply our selves with a very *tender* and *sensible concern* to the *study* of *illuminating truths.*
3. That we act *conformable* to those *measures* of *light* which we have *attained.*
4. That we frequently and constantly address our selves to *God* by *prayer*, for the *illumination* of his *grace.*

1. That we do not suffer, *&c.* *This* is a natural and necessary *consequence* of what has been already said concerning *illumination.* For if *illumination* consist in the *knowledge*, not of *all* sorts of *truths*, but the most *necessary* and *important*, such as *purify* and *perfect* our nature; such as procure us *sacred* and *stable pleasure*, and all the *rewards* that flow from our *adoption* to *God*; it is then plain, he, who would be *perfect*, ought not to amuse and distract his mind in pursuit of *trifling* or *divertive knowledge:* that he ought to shun, and not to admit, whatever is apt to *entangle*, *perplex*, or *defile* him; and to *fix* his thoughts, and *confine* his me-

ditations to the *great truths* of the *goſpel.* He, that *knows the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom he hath ſent,* knows *enough* to oblige him to *virtue,* and to open the way to *glory* and *everlaſting life.* He, that *knows nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified,* knows *enough* in order to *peace, grace,* and *joy*; *enough* to promote *holineſs* and *hope: hope* that abounds in *joy unſpeakable and full of glory.*

2. We muſt apply our ſelves with a very *tender* and ſenſible *concern* to the ſtudy of *illuminating truths.* This *rule* muſt be underſtood to enjoin *three* things. 1. Great *care* and *caution* in examining doctrines propoſed; and in *diſtinguiſhing* between *truth* and *falſhood.* 2. Great *diligence* and *induſtry* to increaſe and enlarge our *knowledge.* 3. Frequent and ſerious *reflections* upon the *truths* we *know.*

1. There is need of great *caution* in the *trial* and *examination* of *doctrines.* This the *ſcripture* it ſelf frequently puts us in mind of: and not without reaſon; becauſe the devil *ſows his tares amongſt the wheat*; *errors,* and theſe too fatal and deſtructive ones, are frequently obtruded upon the world for the *revelations* of *God*; and every *party,* nay, every *ſingle author,* lays the ſtreſs of *ſalvation* on their *peculiar* and *diſtinguiſhing* opinions. *Beloved, believe not every*

every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God: becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world, 1 John iv. 1. 'Tis needleſs to multiply *texts* or *words* on this occaſion. When the peace and purity of our mind, the rectitude and happineſs of our lives, and the bleſſedneſs of eternity has ſo cloſe and neceſſary a dependance upon the *doctrines* we imbibe, that we hereby either *ſecure* or *forfeit* them; who ſees not, unleſs he be ſtupid and infatuated, that greater *care* and *ſolicitude* is neceſſary *here*, than in *any* matter whatever, becauſe there is *no* other of *equal* moment? Bad *money*, or bad *wares*, inſtead of good; an ill *title*, or *conveyance*, inſtead of a firm and clear one, may *impoveriſh* us: bad *drugs*, inſtead of good, may *infect* the *body*, and *deſtroy* the *health:* but what is all *this* to the diſmal conſequences of *error* and *hereſy*, which *impoveriſhes* and *infects* the *mind*, *perverts* the *life*, and *damns* the *man* to all *eternity?* The example of the *Bereans* is never *forgot*; and indeed never *ought* to be on *this* occaſion. We muſt admit nothing *haſtily*; aſſent to nothing without examining the *grounds* on which it ſtands. *Credulity*, *precipitation* and *confidence* are irreconcilable enemies to *knowledge* and *wiſdom*.

2. We are to uſe great *diligence* and *induſtry* to enlarge and increaſe our *knowledge*. The treaſures of *divine wiſdom* are almoſt infinite; and it fares with *thoſe* that *ſtudy* them, as with a *traveller* when he aſcends a *riſing* ground: every *new* ſtep almoſt *enlarges* his *horizon*, and preſents *new* countries, *new* pleaſures to his eye. 'Tis our own negligence, if we do not daily extend the *compaſs* of our *knowledge*: if our *view* of things grow not more diſtinct and clear, and our *belief* of them more firm and ſteddy. This is, to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. This is, to *have the eye of our underſtanding opened*, Eph. i. 17. This is, to *be filled with the knowledge of God, in all wiſdom and underſtanding*, Col. i. 9. This is, finally, *for the word of God to dwell in us richly*, Col. iii. 16. And of what *importance* this is, is manifeſt from what I have before proved; namely, that *illumination* conſiſts not in a credulous and ill-grounded, in a ſlight and ſuperficial, or a confuſed and obſcure, or imperfect ſort of *knowledge*; but in a clear, diſtinct, firm, and well eſtabliſhed one. And the acquiring ſuch a one demands a very *diligent* and an *indefatigable ſtudy* of the *word of life*. To fill the mind with numerous, great, and beautiful *ideas*, and *theſe* clear and diſtinct; to have them engraven in the memory

mory in deep and lasting *characters*; to have them lodged and disposed in that *order*, as to be able in an instant to have recourse to them, to discern and demonstrate plainly the *connexion* and *dependance* of one upon another, and the unquestionable *evidence* of each; this is a work of *time* and *labour*; the fruit of a regular and assiduous *search* after *truth*; and, if the capacities and fortunes of all men will not suffer them to come up to *this*, they must come as near as they can. But if such a *search* as this be *not* necessary to *penetrate* the depths, and to *discover* the beauties of *divine truths*, or to *convince* the world and our selves of the certainty of them; yet certainly *without* it we shall never be able to *extract* their *force* and *virtue*, and to *derive purity* and *nourishment* from them; which is the *next* thing implied in the rule laid down.

3. We must make frequent and serious *reflections* on the *truths* we *do know*. This again naturally follows from the *notion* of *illumination* as it is before settled. For if it is not *every knowledge* of the *best* things that suffices for *illumination*, but a *vital* and *operative* one, that is, a well-grounded, clear, distinct, and well-digested one; it is plain, that constant, daily, and devout meditation is necessary to *illumination*; because 'tis not a transient and perfunctory

ry reflection upon the moſt *important* truths; 'tis not a fleeting, rambling, irregular, and deſultory meditation of them that will poſſeſs us with *ſuch* a kind of *knowledge*. To imprint a *truth* in *lively* notions upon our minds, to digeſt it into *nouriſhment* and *ſtrength*, and make it *mix* it ſelf with all our *affections* and all our *actions*, it is neceſſary that we *dwell* upon it with conſtancy and delight. And accordingly we find, that excellent and elevated ſouls, both under the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, have been daily, nay, almoſt hourly converſant in the *Book of God*: they have been paſſionately *devoted* to the *ſtudy* of it, and *delighted* more in *it*, than in *treaſures* or *honours*, than in the moſt profitable *employments* or engaging *diverſions* of life. 'Tis *this* kind of *meditation* on *God*, on *Jeſus*, the *world*, and our *ſelves*, that can alone acquaint us thoroughly with *each*; 'tis *this* kind of *meditation* on *death* and *judgment*, *heaven* and *hell*, that can *make us wiſe unto ſalvation*.

The *ſum* of all that I have ſaid on this *rule* amounts to *this*: that *illumination* is not to be attained without *labour* and *travel*. It is indeed the *gift of God*: but ſuch a one as he will *never* beſtow, but upon thoſe who *ask*, and *ſeek*, and *knock*. *Divine bounty* and *human induſtry* do here very well *accord*: the *Spirit of God* ge-

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nerally *joins* them together; and 'tis *boldneſs* and *impiety* in *man* to go about to *divide them*, Prov. ii. 4, 5, 6. *If thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as hid treaſures; then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wiſdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtanding.* Nor will any one ſurely think it much to devote his *time* and *labour* to the *attainment* of *illumination*. For what is there that can more juſtly *challenge*, or better *deſerve both?* Can *pleaſure?* There is none but what flows from *wiſdom*, that is either *pure*, *great*, or *laſting*. Can *buſineſs?* What buſineſs can be of *greater* importance, than what ſecures our *ſalvation*, our *eternity? Wiſdom then is the principal thing, therefore get wiſdom: and with all thy getting, get underſtanding*, Prov. iv. 7. for without *this*, the moſt deſirable *poſſeſſions* and *pleaſures* of life are but *cheats* and *illuſions*, *miſchiefs* and *ſnares*. *For the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them*, Prov. i. 32.

3. That we act *conformable* to thoſe *meaſures* of *light* which we have *attained*. The more *ſpiritual* we grow, the *fitter* we are for the reſidence of *God's Spirit*, and the more *capable* of his *influences*. The more we ſubdue all *inordinate affections*, the *clearer* does the *underſtanding* grow, and the

more *abſolute* its *authority*. The *grace* of *God*, if it be complied with and obeyed, while it renders us more *like* God, renders us more *dear* to him too: and *one favour*, if it be not our own fault, qualifies us for *another*. Whoever ſhall obſerve the *ſcriptures*, will find that *holineſs* and *illumination* advance with *equal* ſteps, and grow up by the *ſame* degrees of maturity: that as we paſs on from the *infancy* to the *manhood* of *virtue*, ſo do we from the firſt *rudiments* of *wiſdom* to the *heights* and *myſteries* of it. But on the other hand, *luſt* obſcures and eclipſes the *light* within: *ſin* depraves and corrupts our *principles*: and while we renounce our *virtue*, we *quench* or *chaſe away* the *Spirit*. *Into a malicious ſoul wiſdom ſhall not enter*; *nor dwell in the body that is ſubject unto ſin: for the holy ſpirit of diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without underſtanding*; *and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in*, Wiſd. i. 4, 5.

4. We muſt frequently and conſtantly addreſs our ſelves to *God* by *prayer*, for the *illumination* of his *grace*. There is *nothing* that we do not receive from *above*: and if the moſt *inconſiderable* things be the *gift* of *God*, from *what* fountain but from *him* can we expect *illumination*? The raptures of *poets*, the wiſdom of *law-givers*, the nobleſt pieces of *philoſophy*, and indeed all

all *heroic* and *extraordinary* performances were by the *Pagans* themſelves generally attributed to a *divine inſpiration*. And the *Old Teſtament* aſcribes a tranſcendent skill even in *arts* and *trades* to the *Spirit of God*. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if *illumination* be attributed to *Him* in the *New*. *Wiſdom* and *underſtanding* are eſſential *parts* of *ſanctity*; and therefore muſt proceed from the *ſanctifying Spirit*. We muſt therefore conſtantly look up to *God*, and depend upon *Him* for *illumination*; we muſt earneſtly *pray* in the words of St. *Paul*, *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of glory, would give unto us the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation*, Eph. i. 17. This dependance upon *God*, in expectation of his *bleſſing* on our *ſearch* after *knowledge*, puts the mind into the beſt *diſpoſition* and *frame* to attain it; becauſe it naturally frees and diſengages it from thoſe *paſſions*, *prejudices*, and *diſtractions*, which otherwiſe entangle and diſturb it, and render it incapable of raiſed, ſedate, and coherent thoughts. But what is *more* than this, there are repeated and expreſs *promiſes* made it; ſo that it can never fail of ſucceſs: *Ask, and it ſhall be given you, ſeek, and ye ſhall find, knock, and it ſhall be opened to you.* The reaſon of which is added; *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more*

more ſhall your Father which is in heaven give good things (or as it is *Luke* xi. *the Holy Spirit) to them that aſk him?* Mat. vii. 7, 11. *If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him,* Jam. i. 5. nor do I doubt but *every* good man has theſe *promiſes* verified to him. There are *ſudden* ſuggeſtions, *unexpected* manifeſtations, *extraordinary* elevations of mind, which are never to be accounted for, but by a *divine principle.* Nor does this doctrine of *ſpiritual illumination* or *irradiation* in the leaſt diminiſh the power and excellence of the *goſpel of Chriſt*, no more than the *inſtruction* of the *goſpel* does ſuperſede that of the *Spirit.* For we muſt not think that the *Spirit* does now reveal any *new* truth of *general* uſe or importance; ſince the *canon* of *ſcripture* would on this ſuppoſal be but a defective *rule* of *faith* and *manners.* But, *firſt*, The *Spirit* may *aſſiſt* us in making a fuller *diſcovery* of the *ſenſe* of *ſcripture. Secondly*, The *Spirit* may help us to form *clearer* and *diſtincter notions* of thoſe things we have yet but an *imperfect* and *general* knowledge of; and to fix and imprint them in more *laſting*, as well as more *legible* characters in our minds: or it may recall to our *remembrance* ſuch things as are obliterated and forgotten:

ten: or, finally, it may produce in us a more earneſt and ſteddy application to the truth of God. *Thirdly*, I ſee no reaſon why the *Spirit* may not vouchſafe us particular *impulſes*, *directions*, and *intimations* upon *extraordinary* occaſions and *ſudden* emergencies; where *holy writ* affords us no *light*, and *human prudence* is at a *loſs*. Nor does any thing, that I attribute to the *Spirit* in all this, detract or derogate from the dignity or the efficacy of the *ſcripture*. This then, I conceive, is *what* the *Spirit* does in the work of *Illumination*. But *how* it does it, is not *neceſſary*, nor, I doubt, *poſſible* to be determined. Nor ought our *ignorance* of this to be objected againſt the *truth* of *divine Illumination*. We are ſure we *underſtand* and *remember*, and exerciſe a *freedom* or *liberty* of will, in our choices, reſolutions and actions: but the *manner* how we do this, is an enquiry that does hitherto, for ought I can ſee, wholly ſurpaſs and tranſcend our *philoſophy*.

I will here cloſe this *chapter* with a *prayer* of *Fulgentius*, *lib.* 1. *cap.* 4. After he has in the beginning of the *chapter* diſclaimed all *pretences* to the ſetting up himſelf a *maſter*, *doctor*, or *dictator* to his *brethren*, he breaks out into theſe devout and pious words—— 'I will not ceaſe 'to *pray*, that our true *Maſter* and *Doctor* 'Chriſt

'*Chriſt Jeſus*, either by the *oracles* of *his* '*goſpel*, or by the *converſation* of my *bre-* '*thren* or *joint-diſciples*; or elſe by the ſe- 'cret and delightful inſtruction of *divine* '*inſpiration*, in which, without the ele- 'ments of letters, or the ſound of ſpeech, '*truth* ſpeaks with ſo much the *ſweeter*, as 'the *ſtiller* and *ſofter* voice; would vouch- 'ſafe to *teach* me thoſe things, which I may '*ſo* propoſe, and *ſo* aſſert, that in all my ex- 'poſitions and aſſertions, I may be ever 'found conformable, and obedient, and 'firm to *that truth*, which can neither '*deceive*, nor be *deceived*. For it is *truth* 'itſelf that enlightens, confirms, and aids 'me, that I may always obey and aſſent 'to the *truth*. By *truth* I deſire to be 'informed of thoſe many *more* things 'which I am *ignorant* of, from *whom* I 'have received the *few* I know. Of *truth* 'I beg, through preventing and aſſiſting 'grace, to be inſtructed in whatever I '*yet* know not, which conduces to the 'intereſt of my virtue and happineſs; 'to be preſerved and kept ſtedfaſt in *thoſe* 'truths which I *know*; to be reformed 'and rectified in thoſe points, in which, 'as is common to man, I am *miſtaken*; 'to be confirmed and eſtabliſhed in thoſe 'truths wherein I *waver*; and to be de- 'livered from thoſe opinions that are *er-* '*roneous* or *hurtful*. I beg, laſtly, that

'*truth*

'*truth* may ever find, both in my thoughts
'and speeches, all that sound and whole-
'some doctrine I have received from *its*
'gift; and that *it* would always cause me to
'utter those things which are agreeable to
'*itself* in the *first* place; and consequently
'acceptable to *all* faithful *Christians* in the
'*next.*'

CHAP. III.

Of liberty in general. The notion of it truly stated, and guarded. The fruits of this liberty. 1. *Sin being a great evil, deliverance from it is great happiness.* 2. *A freedom and pleasure in the acts of righteousness and good works.* 3. *The near relation it creates between God and us.* 4. *The great fruit of all, eternal life; with a brief exhortation to endeavour after deliverance from sin.*

AFTER *Illumination*, which is the *Perfection* of the *understanding*, follows *liberty*, which is the *Perfection* of the *will*. In treating of which, I shall, *first*, give an account of *liberty* in *general*: and *then* discourse of the several *parts* of it; as it regards *wickedness*, *unfruitfulness*, *human infirmities*, and *original corruption*.

§. 1. What

§. 1. What *liberty* is. There have been ſeveral *miſtakes* about this matter: but theſe have been ſo abſurd or extravagant, ſo deſigning or ſenſual, that they *need* not, I think, a ſerious *refutation*. However, 'tis neceſſary in a word or two to remove this *rubbiſh* and *lumber* out of my way, that I may build up and eſtabliſh the *truth* more eaſily and regularly. *Some* then have placed Chriſtian *liberty* in deliverance from the *Moſaic yoke*. But this is to make our *liberty* conſiſt in freedom from a *yoke* to which we were *never* ſubject; and to make our glorious Redemption, from the tyranny of *ſin* and the *miſery* that attends it, dwindle into an immunity from *external* rites and obſervances. 'Tis true, the *Moſaic* inſtitution, as far as it conſiſted in *outward* obſervances and *typical* rites, is now diſſolved; the *Meſſias* being come, who was the *ſubſtance* of thoſe *ſhadows*; and the *beauty of holineſs* being unfolded and diſplayed, without any *veil* upon her face. But what is this to *eccleſiaſtical authority*? or to thoſe *eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions*, which are no part of the *Moſaic* yoke? from the abrogation indeed, or abolition of *ritual* and *typical* religion, one may infer, *firſt*, That *Chriſtianity* muſt be a *rational* worſhip, a *moral ſpiritual* ſervice. And therefore, *ſecondly*, That *human* inſtitutions, when they enjoyn

joyn any thing as a *neceſſary* and *eſſential* part of religion, which *God* has not made ſo, or when they impoſe ſuch *rites*, as, thro' the number or nature of them, cheriſh *ſuperſtition*, *obſcure* the *goſpel*, weaken its force, or prove *burthenſome* to us, are to be rejected and not complied with. Thus much is plain, and nothing farther. There have been *others*, who have run into more intolerable *errors*. For ſome have placed *Chriſtian liberty* in exemption from the laws of *man*: and *others*, advancing higher, in exemption even from the *moral* and *immutable* laws of *God*. But the *folly* and *wickedneſs* of theſe opinions ſufficiently *confute* them: ſince 'tis notorious to every one, that *diſobedience* and *anarchy* is as flat a contradiction to the *peaceableneſs*, as *voluptuouſneſs* and *luxury* is to the *purity* of that *wiſdom which is from above*. But how abſurd and wicked ſoever theſe *notions* are, yet do we find them greedily embraced and induſtriouſly propagated at *this* day; and behold, with amazement, the baffled and deſpicable *Gnoſticks*, *Priſcilianiſts*, *Libertines*, and I know not what *other* ſpawn of *hell*, reviving in *deiſts* and *atheiſts*. *Theſe* indeed do not advance their errors under a pretence of *Chriſtian liberty*; but, which is more ingenuous, and leſs ſcandalous of the two, in open *defiance* and confeſſed *oppoſition* to *Chriſtianity*. They tell

tell us, that we impoſe upon the world *falſe* and *fantaſticks* notions of *virtue* and *liberty:* that *religion* does *enſlave* man, not ſet him *free*; awing the mind by groundleſs and ſuperſtitious principles, and reſtraining and infringing our true and natural *liberty:* which, if we will believe *them*, conſiſts in giving *nature* its full ſwing; letting looſe the reins to the moſt headſtrong *luſts*, and the wildeſt and the moſt corrupt *imaginations*. But to this 'tis eaſy to anſwer, that while theſe men attempt to eſtabliſh their errors, and fortify their minds in them, by *arguments* of ſome ſort or other, as they do; 'tis plain, that *they* ſuppoſe and acknowledge with *us*, that they ought to be ruled and governed by *reaſon:* and if *this* be true, then, by undeniable conſequence, true *liberty* muſt conſiſt, not in doing what we *liſt*, but what we *ought*; not in following our *luſt* or *fancy*, but our *reaſon*; not in being *exempt* from *law*, but in *being a law to our ſelves*. And then I appeal to all the world, whether the diſcipline of *virtue*, or *libertiniſm*; whether the ſchools of *Epicurus*, or *Chriſt*, be the way to true *liberty*. I appeal to the *experience* of mankind, whether *ſpiritual* or *ſenſual* pleaſure; whether the *love* of *God* and *virtue*, or the *love* of the *world* and *body*, be the more like to qualify and diſpoſe us to obey the

the dictates of ſober and ſolid *reaſon.* But the truth is, here is no need of *arguments*; the *lives* and *fortunes* of *atheiſts* and *deiſts* proclaim aloud what a glorious kind of *liberty* they are like to bleſs the world with, 2 *Pet.* ii. 19. *Whilſt they promiſe liberty, they themſelves are the ſervants of corruption.* And this *corruption* draws on their *ruin.* The diſhonourable and miſerable *courſes*, in which theſe poor wretches are plunged, and in which, generally, they periſh before their time, are ſuch an open *contradiction* to *reaſon*, that no man doubts but that they have abandoned *its* conduct, that they have given themſelves up to that of *luſt* and *humour*; and that they earneſtly endeavour to force or betray their *reaſon* into a *compliance* to *ſcreen* themſelves from the reproach and diſturbance of their own *minds*, and from the ſhame and contempt of the *world.* I have dwelt long enough on *this* argument. 'Tis now time to paſs *on*, and reſolve what *Chriſtian liberty* really *is.*

This is in a manner evident from what has been ſuggeſted already. For if *reaſon* be the governing faculty in *man*, then the *liberty of man* muſt conſiſt in his *ſubjection* to *reaſon*: and ſo *Chriſtian liberty* will be nothing elſe but *ſubjection* to *reaſon* enlightened by *revelation.* *Two* things therefore are *eſſential* to true *liberty:* A

clear and unbyaſſed *judgment*; and a power and capacity of acting *conformable* to it. This is a very *ſhort*, but *full* account of *liberty*. *Darkneſs* and *impotence* conſtitute our *ſlavery*: *light* and *ſtrength* our *freedom*. Man is then *free*, when his *reaſon* is not awed by vile *fears*, or bribed by viler *hopes*: when it is not tumultuouſly tranſported and hurried away by *luſts* and *paſſions*; nor cheated and deluded by the gilded appearances of *ſophiſticated* good; but it deliberates *impartially*, and commands *effectually*. And becauſe the great *obſtacle* of this *liberty* is *ſin*; becauſe natural and contracted *corruption* are the *fetters* in which we are bound; becauſe the *law in the body wars againſt the law in the mind*, obſcuring the *light*, and enfeebling the *authority* of *reaſon*; hence it is, that *Chriſtian liberty* is as truly as commonly deſcribed by a *dominion* over the *body*, by the ſubduing our corrupt *affections*, and by *deliverance* from *ſin*. This notion of *liberty* may be ſufficiently eſtabliſhed upon that account of *ſervitude* or *bondage* which the *apoſtle* gives us, *Rom.* vii. where he repreſents it as conſiſting in *impotence* or *inability* to do thoſe things, which *God* commands, and *reaſon* approves: *For to will is preſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not*, ver. 18. *Liberty* therefore muſt on the *contrary* conſiſt in being

able,

able not only to *will*, but to *do* good; in *obeying* those *commandments*, which we cannot but acknowledge to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*. And this is the very notion which our *Lord* and *Master* gives us of it, *Joh.* viii. For, when the *Jews* bragged of their *freedom*, he lets them know, that *freedom* could not consist with *subjection* to *sin*: *He that committeth sin is the servant of sin*, ver. 34. That honourable *parentage*, and the *freedom* of the *body*, was but a false and ludicrous *appearance* of *liberty*: that if they would be *free indeed*, *the Son must make them so*, ver. 36. *i. e.* they must, by his *spirit* and *doctrine* be rescued from the *servitude* of *lust* and *error*, and be set at *liberty* to work *righteousness*. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*; *and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*, ver. 31, 32. Finally, not to multiply *proofs* of a truth that is scarce liable to be *controverted*, as the *apostle* describes the *bondage* of a *sinner* in *Rom.* vii; so does he the *liberty* of a *saint* in *Rom.* viii. For there, *ver.* 2. he tells us, that the *law of the spirit of life* has set the true Christian *free from the law of sin* and *death*. And then he lets us know *wherein* this *liberty* consists; *in walking*, *not after the flesh*, *but after the spirit*; in the *mortification* of the *body of sin*, and *restitution* of the *mind* to its just *empire*

and *authority*. *If Chriſt be in you, the body is dead becauſe of ſin; but the ſpirit is life becauſe of righteouſneſs*, ver. 10. And all this is the ſame thing with his *deſcription* of *liberty*, chap. vi. where, 'tis nothing elſe, but for a man to be made *free from ſin, and become the ſervant of God*. Thus then we have a plain account of *bondage* and *liberty*. Yet for the clearer underſtanding of *both*, it will not be amiſs to obſerve, that they are *each* capable of different *degrees*; and both the *one* and the *other* may be *more* or *leſs* entire, compleat, and abſolute, according to the different *progreſs* of men in *vice* and *virtue*. Thus, in *ſome* men, not their *will* only, but their very *reaſon* is enſlaved. Their *underſtanding* is ſo far infatuated, their affections ſo *intirely* captivated, that there is no *conflict* at all between the *mind* and the *body*: they commit *ſin* without any *reluctancy* beforehand, or any *remorſe* afterwards: their *ſeared conſcience* making no *remonſtrance*, inflicting no *wounds*, nor denouncing any *threats*. This is the *laſt* degree of *vaſſalage*. *Such* are ſaid in *ſcripture* to be *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. *Others* there are, in whom their luſt and appetite *prevails* indeed, but not without *oppoſition*. They *reaſon* rightly; and, which is the natural reſult of this, have ſome *deſires* and *wiſhes* of *righteouſneſs*: but through the

the prevalency of the *body*, they are unable to act and live *conformable* to their *reason*. Their *understanding* has indeed *light*, but not *authority*: it *consents* to the *law* of *God*, but it has no power, no force to make it be *obeyed*: it produces indeed some good *inclinations*, *purposes*, and *efforts*; but they prove *weak* and *ineffectual* ones, and *unable* to grapple with the stronger *passion* raised by the *body*. And as *bondage*, so *liberty* is of different *degrees*, and different *strength*. For though *liberty* may be able to *subsist*, where there is much *opposition* from the *body*; yet 'tis plain *that liberty* is most *absolute* and *compleat*, where the *opposition* is *least*, where the *body* is reduced to an entire *submission* and *obsequiousness*, and the *spirit* reigns with an uncontrouled and unlimited *authority*. And this *latter* is *that liberty* which I would have my *perfect* man possessed of. I know very well 'tis *commonly* taught by *some*, that there is *no* such state: But, I think, this *doctrine*, if it be throughly considered, has neither *scripture*, *reason*, nor *experience* to support it. For as to those places, *Rom.* vii. and *Gal.* v. urged in favour of an almost incessant, strong, and too frequently prevalent *lusting of the flesh against the spirit*; it has been often answered, and proved too, that they are so far from belonging to the *perfect*, that they belong not to

the *regenerate*. But, on the contrary, thoſe *texts* that repreſent the *yoke of Chriſt eaſy, and his burthen light*; which affirm the *commandments of Chriſt not to be grievous to ſuch as are made perfect in love*; do all bear witneſs to *that liberty* which I *contend* for. *Nor* does *reaſon* favour my opinion leſs than *ſcripture*. For if the *perfect* man be a *new creature*; if he be *tranſformed* into a *new nature*; if his *body* be *dead to ſin, and his ſpirit live to righteouſneſs*; in one word, if the *world be as much crucified to him, as he to it*; I cannot ſee why it ſhould not be *eaſy* for him to act *conſonant* to his *nature*; why he ſhould not with pleaſure and readineſs *follow* that *ſpirit*, and *obey* thoſe *affections*, which *reign* and *rule* in him. Nor can I ſee why a *habit of righteouſneſs* ſhould not have the ſame *properties* with *other habits*; that is, be attended with *eaſe* and *pleaſure* in its operations and actions. 'Tis true, I can eaſily ſee why the *habits of righteouſneſs* are *acquired* with more *difficulty* than thoſe of any *other* kind: but, I ſay, I cannot ſee, when they *are* acquired, why they ſhould not be as *natural* and *delightful* to us as any *other*. *Laſtly*, How *degenerate* ſoever ages *paſt* have been, or the *preſent* is, I dare not ſo far diſtruſt the goodneſs of my cauſe, or the virtue of *mankind*, as not to refer myſelf willingly, in this point,

to

to the decision of *experience*. I am very well assured, that truth and justice, devotion and charity, honour and integrity, are to a great many so dear and delightful, so natural, so easy, that it is hard to determine, whether they are more strongly moved by a sense of *duty*, or the instigations of *love* and *inclination*; and that they cannot do a *base* thing without the utmost *mortification* and *violence* to their *nature*. Nor is all this to be wondered at, if we again reflect on what I just now intimated, that the *perfect* man is a *new creature*, *transformed daily from glory to glory*: that he is moved by *new affections*, raised and fortified by *new principles*: that he is animated by a *divine energy*, and *sees* all things by a *truer* and *brighter light*; through *which* the *things of God* appear *lovely* and *beautiful*, the things of the *world deformed* and *worthless*; just as to him who views them through a *microscope*, the *works of God* appear *exact* and *elegant*; but *those of man*, *coarse*, and *bungling*, and *ugly*. My *opinion* then, which asserts the *absolute liberty* of the *perfect* man, is sufficiently *proved here*, and in *chapter the first*. And *if* I thought it were *not*, I could easily *reinforce* it with fresh *recruits*. For the glorious *characters* that are given us in *scripture*, of the *liberty* of the *children of God*, and the blessed *fruit* of it, *peace*

and *joy in the Holy Ghost*, would easily furnish me with invincible *arguments:* nor would the *contrary* opinion ever have been *able* to have kept the *field* so *long* as it has done, had it not been favoured by a *weak* and *decayed piety*; by the *fondnesses* of men for *themselves*, in spight of their *sins* and *frailties*; and by many *mistaken texts*.

But that this matter may, if possible, be freed from *all objections*. 1. I here *distinguish* between *inordinate* and *natural affections*. By *inordinate affections*, I mean the tendencies of the soul towards that which is *unlawful:* by *natural*, its propension to the *body* with which it is invested; the desire of its *health* and *ease*, and the *conveniencies* and *necessaries of life* for this end. Now when *religion* enjoyns repugnances to the *former* appetites, the *obedience* of the *perfect* man has *no reluctancy* in it: but when it enjoyns things, as sometimes occasionally it does, which thwart and cross the *latter*; here the *obedience* even of *Christ* himself could not be exempt from *conflict*; for our *natural appetites*, in *this* sense of them, will *never* be put off till our *bodies* be. I think this is so *clear*, it needs not be illustrated by *instances:* or else 'twere easy to shew, that tho' good men have practised *temperance*, *chastity*, *charity*, and other virtues

tues of this kind with *ease* and *pleasure* too; yet has nature *shrunk* and *startled* at *persecution* and *martyrdom:* tho' even *here* too the courage and resolution of *some* hath appeared to be much *above* what *human nature* ever seemed *capable* of. 2. I do not in the least suppose that *nature* is so *changed*, but that the *inclinations* to sinful pleasure, or profit, or any other forbidden object, will soon *revive* again, even in the *perfect* man, unless he keep a *watch* and *guard* upon himself, and *pass the time of his sojourning here in fear.* Not to be subject to *disorderly desires*, not to be liable to *irregular motions*, is the privilege of *souls* when stripped of a *mortal* body, or cloathed with an *immortal* one. Till *then*, the conjunction of *flesh* and *blood* will ever render the poor *soul* obnoxious to *carnal* and *worldly* appetites: and the *natural* appetites of the body do so easily pass those bounds that divide them from *sinful* ones, that the *best* of men can never be *secure*, but when the mind is taken up in *contemplation*, *devotion*, *good works*, or engaged in the *prosecution* of some just and honest *design*, or amused by some innocent *recreation:* for in *these* cases the *body* is either made the *instrument of righteousness*; or at leastwise, 'tis innocently *busied* and *diverted* from those *objects*, to which it has too impetuous a *tendency*. I have now,

now, I think, sufficiently *stated* the *notion* of *true liberty*; and, I hope, sufficiently *guarded* it: and have nothing to do but to *proceed* to the *fruits* of it; which will serve for so many *motives* or *inducements* to its *attainment*.

§. 2. Of the *fruits* of *liberty*.

These may be reduced under four *heads*.

1. *Sin* being a great *evil*, *deliverance* from it is great *happiness*.
2. A second fruit of this *liberty* is *good works*.
3. It gives us a near *relation* to *God*.
4. The great and last *fruit* of it is *eternal life*.

These are *all* comprised by the *apostle* in *Rom.* vi. 21, 22, 23. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And these are the great *ends* which the *gospel*, that *perfect law of liberty*, aims at, and for which it was *preached* to the world;

world; as appears from those *words* of our *Lord* to St. *Paul*, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. *Unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* I will *here* insist on these blessed *effects* of *Christian liberty*; not only because the *design* of the *chapter* demands it, but also to prevent the being obliged to any tedious *repetition* of them hereafter, under every distinct *branch* of *Christian liberty*.

§. 1. *Sin* is a great *evil*; and therefore *deliverance* from the *dominion* of it is a great *good*. To make this evident, we need but reflect a little on the *nature* and *effects* of *sin*. If we inquire into the *nature* of *sin*, we shall find that it is *founded* in the *subversion* of the dignity, and *defacing* the beauty of *human nature*: and that it *consists* in the *darkness* of our understanding, the *depravity* of our affections, and the *feebleness* and *impotence* of the will. The *understanding* of a *sinner* is incapable of *discerning* the certainty and force of divine truths, the loveliness of virtue, the unspeakable pleasure which now flows from the great and precious *promises* of the gospel, and the incomparably

bly greater which will one day flow from the accompliſhment and fruition of them. His *affections*, which is fixed and bent on *virtue*, had been *incentives*, as they were deſigned by God, to *noble* and *worthy* actions, being *byaſſed* and *perverted*, do now hurry him on to *lewd* and *wicked* ones. And by *theſe* the *mind*, if at any time it chance to be awakened and rendered ſenſible of its happineſs and duty, is *overpowered* and *oppreſſed*. If *this* were not the true *ſtate* of a *ſinner*; if the *ſtrength* of *ſin* did not thus conſiſt in the *diſorder* and *impotence* of all the *faculties* of the *ſoul*, whence is it that the *ſinner* acts as he *does?* Is it not evident that his *underſtanding* is *infatuated*, when he lives as if he were merely, wholly, *body?* As if he had *no ſoul*, or none but one *reſulting from*, and *diſſolved with*, its *temperament* and *contexture?* One deſigned to no higher purpoſe, than to contrive, miniſter to, and partake in its *ſenſualities?* Is it not evident that *he* has little expectation of *another world*, who *lays up his treaſures* only in *this*; and lives as if he were born only *to make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof?* 'Tis true, *all ſinners* are not *equally* ſtupid or obdurate: but even in thoſe in whom ſome *ſparks* of *underſtanding* and *conſcience* remain *unextinguiſhed*, how are the *weak* deſires of *virtue* baffled and

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over-powered by the much *ſtronger* paſſions which they have for the *body* and the *world?* Do they not find themſelves reduced to that wretched *ſtate of bondage*, wherein the *good* that *they would do*, *that they do not*; *but the evil that they would not do*, *that is preſent with them?* 'Tis plain then that *ſin* is a *diſeaſe* in our nature: that it not only *extinguiſhes* the *grace* of the *Spirit*, and *obliterates* the *image of God* ſtamped on the ſoul in its creation; but alſo ſcatters and diffuſes I know not what *venom* and *infection* thorough it, that makes it eagerly *purſue* its *own miſery*. 'Tis a *diſeaſe* that produces more *intolerable* effects in the *ſoul*, than *any* whatever can in the *body*. The predominancy of any noxious *humour* can breed no *pain*, no *diſturbance*, equal to that of a predominant *paſſion:* no *ſcars* or *ruins* which the worſt *diſeaſe* leaves behind it, are half ſo *deformed* and *loathſome* as thoſe of *vice:* nay, that laſt *change*, which *death* it ſelf produces, when it converts a *beautiful* body into *duſt* and *rottenneſs*, is not half ſo *contemptible* or *hateful* as that of *ſin*; when it transforms *man* into a *beaſt* or *devil*. If we do not yet ſufficiently comprehend the *nature* of *ſin*, by viewing it as it exiſts in our *minds* and *hearts*, we may contemplate it in our *actions*. And *here*, 'tis blindneſs and folly, raſhneſs and madneſs,

madneſs, incogitance, levity, falſhood, and cowardiſe; 'tis *every thing* that is *mean* and *baſe*: and all this *aggravated* by the moſt accurſed *ingratitude* that human nature is capable of. Theſe and the like *reflections* on the *nature* of *ſin*, cannot chuſe but render it *hateful*. And if,

Secondly, We make any ſerious ones on the *effects* of it, they cannot fail of rendering it *frightful* and *dreadful* to *us*. Theſe *effects* may be eſpecially reduced to *three*: 1. The ill influence *ſin* has upon our *temporal* concerns. 2. *Guilt*. And, 3. *Fear*. As to the *firſt* of theſe, I ſhall only ſay, that we ſuffer very few *evils* but what are owing to our own *ſins*: that it is very rarely any *calamity* befals us, but we may put our finger on the *fountain*, the *ſin*, I mean, from whence the miſchief flows. *Whence comes wars and fightings amongſt you*, ſaith St. *James*, *come they not from your luſts, which war in your members?* This is every jot as applicable to *private* as *publick* contentions: and *where envy, ſtrife, and contention is*, no *evil work*, no *diſaſter* will be long *abſent*. I might run through all the different *kinds* of *evils* that infeſt the *body*, or embroil the *fortune*; that blaſt our *hopes*, or ſtain our *deſires*: and eaſily ſhew, that they all generally ſpring from our

our *vices*. Nay, what is worſe yet, I could ſhew that *ſin* converts our *good things* into *evil*, and our *enjoyments* into *puniſhments*: that it renders the *ſlighteſt* evils *intolerable*; turns *ſcratches* into *wounds*, and *wounds* into *gangrenes*. But this is too *copious* a ſubject; and would inſenſibly render me *voluminous*, when I would be as *ſhort* as poſſibly I can. A *ſecond effect* of *ſin* is *guilt*; which is nothing elſe, but a *conſciouſneſs* of having *done ill*, and an *obligation* to *puniſhment* reſulting from it. And tho' men often *ſin* with *hopes* of *impunity*; yet it is hard to imagine, even on *this* ſuppoſal, that they ſhould *ſin* without ſuffering the *reproaches* of their *own minds*; which ſurely muſt be very *uneaſy* to them: to be perpetually *vexed* at one's *own folly*; to *commit* thoſe things which we inwardly *condemn*, and be in continual *pain* leſt they ſhould *come to light*; to be always *diſpleaſed* at *one's ſelf*, and *afraid*, not only of the *reflections* of *others*, but our *own*: *this* is, methinks, a *great* evil, did no *other* attend our *ſin*. But, *thirdly*, *fear* is almoſt inſeparably joined with *guilt*: for *guilt* does not only damp the *chearfulneſs*, and enfeeble the *vigour* of the *mind*; it does not only deſtroy that *confidence* man would otherwiſe *naturally* have in *God*, and render him *cowardly* and *puſillanimous*; but it *terrifies* his ſoul with *melancholy* apprehenſions,

ſions, and makes him live continually in *fear* of *death* and *puniſhment*. And thus *ſcripture* repreſents the *ſtate* of a *ſinner*: *The wicked flee when none purſue; but the righteous are as bold as a lion*, Prov. xxviii. 1. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 2. *There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith the Lord*, Iſa. xlviii. 22. *To deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life time ſubject to bondage*, Heb. ii. 15. *The ſinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulneſs has ſurpriſed the hypocrites; who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongſt us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?* Iſa. xxxiii. 14. Nor let any one wonder, that notwithſtanding the *outward gaiety* of the *ſinner*, the *Spirit* thus *deſcribes* the *inward condition* of his *ſoul*. As long as men retain the *belief* of a *God*, it is impoſſible they ſhould wholly free themſelves from the *fear* of him. They may indeed *forget* him in the *fits* of *luſt* or *paſſion*: but in their *intermiſſions* his *terrors* will *return* upon them with *more violence*. *Again*, as long as men retain the common principles of *truth* and *juſtice*; if they acknowledge but the obligation of that *univerſal law*, *Thou ſhalt do to others, as thou wouldeſt they ſhould do unto thee*, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould *reflect* on their *ſins* without *regret* and *uneaſineſs*; for there is no *ſin* but has more or leſs,

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repugnancy in it to *truth*, *justice*, and *goodness*. *Finally*, As long as men are persuaded that there is such a faculty as *conscience*, that *God* has prescribed them a *law*, and that they are *accountable* to *him*; the *natural conscience* cannot chuse, but by *fits*, and upon *occasions*, scourge and torture, lance and gash them. And 'tis a hard matter to *wear* out *these notions:* they are so *natural* and *obvious*; the *proofs* of them are so *clear*; their *reputation* and *authority* in the world is so well *established*; and the *providence* of *God* so frequently *inculcates* them. Men may easily wear out all sense of the *beauty*, and of their *obligations* to their *heights* and *perfections* of *virtue:* but they cannot so easily do this in reference to *virtue* in *general*; because 'tis tempered and accommodated to *human nature* and *society*; and necessary to the tolerable *well-doing* of the *world*. Men may soon, I confess, extinguish their *Christianity*, but not *humanity:* and while *this* remains, *sin* will leave a *stain* and *guilt* behind it; and *guilt* will be attended by *uneasiness* and *fear*. The very *pagans*, who had advanced *so far* in wickedness, as to be *given up* to all *dishonourable* passions, and to *commit all uncleanness with greediness*, had not yet so *mortified* and *stupified* their *conscience*, but that *it* gave much *disturbance*, Rom. i. *ver.* 32. 'tis said of them,

that *they knew the judgment of God, that they which committed ſuch things, were worthy of death.* And Rom. ii. 15. *Their conſciences* are ſaid *to accuſe and condemn them.* And 'tis of *very wicked* men, that the *author* to the *Hebrews* affirms, that *through fear of death they were all their life-time ſubject to bondage.*

But are there not, will ſome ſay, many *ingenuous* and *brave* ſpirits, who have *diſperſed* thoſe vain *ſpectres*, and burſt thoſe ſuperſtitious *fetters*, by which you labour to *ſcare* and *enſlave* the world? I do not doubt, indeed, but that there are *too many* who have vigorouſly endeavoured to caſhier all *principles* of natural and revealed *religion*, and utterly to extinguiſh all *conſcience* of *good* and *evil.* But *this* is ſuch an *attempt*, in which, I confeſs, I could never have *believed*, that the moſt *daring ſinner* could have proved *ſucceſsful*, had not the *ſcriptures* told me, that there are ſome *who are paſt feeling*, Eph. iv. 19. *of a ſeared conſcience*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. *who are not aſhamed when they have committed iniquity neither can they bluſh*, Jer. vi. 15. *who call good evil, and evil good; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter*, Iſai. v. 20. *Such ſinners* there *are* then: but *what* does this amount to? *what* can *their* ſenſe or example *weigh?* I am ſure theſe

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poor wretches are as far diſtant from any *true happineſs*, as from *ſenſe*; and deſerve our *pity*, not *imitation*. As will eaſily appear from theſe following *conſiderations*.

1. 'Tis true, *conſcience* depends upon *opinion*: but what if this *opinion* depend upon *ſenſe* and *truth*? what if it be built upon the *demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power*? in what a deplorable *condition* are theſe *men of wit*? the *fear* of an *angry God*, *a judgment* to come, and *an hell*, is no *common* or *ordinary fear*. 'Tis not the *fear* of a *ſcratch* or *wound* in the *body*; of a *baffle* in the purſuit of *preferment*, or a *diſappointment* in that of *pleaſure*; 'tis not the *loſs* or the *forfeiture* of *eſtate*, in part, or whole: 'tis not a *blot* upon our *reputation*; 'tis not the *death* of a *child*, a *brother*, or, what is *more*, if *he* be ſuch, a *friend*: 'tis not any thing of *this* kind that is the *object* of *this fear*; but *miſery* pure and unallayed; complicated, accumulated *miſery*; *miſery* unalterable, incurable, and laſting as long as *eternity*. Methinks, before one ſhould *venture* on a *ſin*, which is *threatened* with ſuch a *ſtate* as this; and much more, before one ſhould reſolve to *continue* in it, it were reaſonable to be very *ſure*, that the *notion* of a *hell* were *falſe*, and the doctrine of *eternal puniſhment* a *mere bugbear*. Nay, I proteſt, in a

matter of this *importance*, I think one ſhould ſcarce truſt to a *demonſtration*, unleſs it had paſſed the *teſt* of the moſt *ſolid* and *impartial* part of mankind, and ſtood the *ſhock* and *tryal* of many *ages*. But, alas, after the utmoſt *efforts* of *wit* and *luſt*, what has ever *yet* been produced, that has been able to undergo the *examination* even of an *honeſt man?* what *arguments* have yet been ſtarted againſt a *judgment to come*, that have been *able* to work upon *any* who were truly *ſerious* in the point? and if a *judgment to come*, why not an *hell?* *revelation* is plain; and *reaſon* can find no inconſiſtency in the doctrine. *Human laws* puniſh a *ſingle* offence ſometimes with *death* or *baniſhment*; with *loſs* of *eſtate*: and by *this*, and divers *other* ways, extend the puniſhment of the criminal to his *poſterity*: that is, make it as *eternal* as they *can*. And ſhall it be thought *unjuſt* in *God* to puniſh the *repeated* provocations of an *impenitent life*; the *neglect of that great ſalvation* wrought by the *blood*, and *publiſhed* by the *mouth* of *his dearly beloved ſon*; and all this *wilfully* in *defiance* of the *light* of the *goſpel*, and *ſolicitations* of the *ſpirit*; in defiance of *mercies* and *chaſtiſements*; ſhall it, I ſay, be thought *unjuſt* in *God* to puniſh *this* by a *miſerable eternity?* when *infinite goodneſs* has in vain *tried* all imaginable *means* to

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reclaim a *sinner*, what has *he* to complain of, if *God* leave him to the *effects* of his own *choice*? *sin*, as it alienates our *affections* from *God here*, so must it certainly exclude *us* from *his presence* and his *favour hereafter*. And what can be the case of that *wretched creature*, who is banished *for ever* to those *black* and *dismal* regions, which no *ray*, no *influence* of divine *goodness* can ever reach? *where* shall those *unhappy creatures* dwell, which shall be chased by the *presence* and *glory of God* out of the *new heaven* and the *new earth*, (or which rather can never approach either) *but* in that *outward darkness*, which is parted from the world of the *blessed* by an *unpassable gulph*? Ah then! if this be *so*, *what* do wretched men *gain* by growing *impudent* in *wickedness*? Alas! the more *insensible* men are of the deformity and danger of *sin*, the more *desperate* their *state*, the more *incurable* their *disease*; and the nearer *they* to *death* and *destruction*: *My spirit shall not always strive with man*. *This is* indeed a *blessed advantage*, to stand upon the brink of *damnation*! 'tis a *glorious victory*, to have *defeated* all the means of *grace* and *happiness*! 'tis an *heroick atchievement* to be able to *extinguish* all true *sense* and *reason*, as well as *religion*, and become impregnable, impenetrable to all *arguments*, to all *motives*, which either the tenderest *love*

or the profoundeſt *wiſdom* of *God* and *man* can attack us by!

2. I cannot but think that thoſe *very* men, who for the *moſt part* are *obdurate* and *inſenſible*, do ſuffer *ſome*, though *rare returns* of *anxiety* and *fear*. *Why* elſe are they ſuch avowed *enemies* to *ſolitude* and *retirement?* to all ſerious and calm *reflections*; that they are ready to take up with a moſt trifling and contemptible *buſineſs* or *diverſion?* nay, *tired* with a dull and taſteleſs *repetition* of a *folly*; they chuſe to *repeat* it to their *lives end*, rather than be *alone*, and *thoughtful?* what is this, but to *confeſs* that there is ſomething *within*, which they are afraid to *awaken?* that there is ſuch a *brightneſs* in divine *truth*, that they dare not open their *eyes* upon it, leſt it ſhould fill their ſouls with the *terrors* of *God?* this *height* of *wickedneſs* then at beſt is a ſtate fit only for *fortunate ſinners*, who can rowl and tumble from *folly* to *folly*, from *one* impertinence or extravagance to *another*, *endleſly*: and yet what becomes of thoſe poor things, when a *diſaſter*, when a *diſeaſe*, nay, but a *wakeful* hour by night forces them to *retire* into *themſelves?*

3. A *ſinner* does not *ſoon* arrive at this ſtate of *inſenſibility*. It coſts him very *dear* to grow *impudent* in his luſt. Many a *pang*, many a *torment* has he ſuffered firſt;

firſt; often has he felt the *wounds* of *conſcience*; often has he trembled and ſhrunk at the *menaces* of *God*. The *ſoul* can no more be reconciled to *ſin*, than the *body* to *exceſs*, but by *paſſing* through many *painful* and *ſickly* fits, many *uneaſie* pangs and qualms. And is it not worth the *while* to *endure* ſo *much* in order to be *damned?* is it not an infallible *mark* of more than vulgar *wiſdom*, to purchaſe *miſery* at ſo *dear* a rate? to *endure hardſhip as good ſoldiers of Chriſt Jeſus*, for a *crown*, a *never-fading crown*; *this* with them is an undertaking that deſerves to be *expoſed*, and *laſhed* with the utmoſt *ſeverity* of ſpight and confidence: but to *ſuffer*, as it were, *repeated martyrdoms* to gain an *hell*, this is what they think *becomes* men of *their parts* and *gallantry*. Bleſſed God! to what degree of *madneſs* and *ſtupidity* may men of the *fineſt* natural parts ſink, when *abandoned* by thee? or rather, when *they* themſelves *abandon thee*, and that *light* which thou haſt ſet up in the *world?* our *Lord* and *Maſter* thought the *profits* and *pleaſures* of the *whole* world a *poor* compenſation for the *loſs* of the *ſoul*: *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world*, &c. Matt. xvi. But *theſe* men, rather than it ſhould *not* periſh for ever, will charge through *ſhame* and *pain*, *remorſe* and *ſickneſs*, and *all* the *obſtacles* that

God has ſet between *us* and a deſperate height of *wickedneſs*.

4. Though a *ſinner* may come to that paſs, as to *ſuppreſs* his *conſcience*, and *maſter* his *fears*; yet he muſt ever be *conſcious* to himſelf of the *fruitleſneſs* and the *meanneſs* of a courſe of *ſin*. He muſt needs be inwardly ſenſible, that he has *wearied* himſelf to commit iniquity to *no purpoſe*; that his *mind* has been *reſtleſs* and *tempeſtuous*, *like a troubled ſea*, *caſting up its own mire and dirt*: he muſt be conſcious to himſelf, that *he* is *falſe* and *unjuſt*, *unconſtant* and *ingrateful*, and in *bondage* to *ſuch* luſts as are *mean* and *poor*, and injurious to his *repoſe*, and which he has often *wiſhed* himſelf *free* from. And *this*, no doubt, muſt be a *bleſſed* condition, when a man's *own mind* does to his face aſſure him, that *he* is *that* very thing which *all the world condemns and ſcorns*, and which he cannot *endure* to be *charged* with, without *reſenting* it as the higheſt *affront!* certainly it were better that *all the world* ſhould *call me fool*, and *knave*, and *villain*, than that *I* ſhould *call myſelf ſo*, and *know it* to be *true*. My *peace* and *happineſs* depends upon my *own* opinion of *myſelf*, not *that* of *others*: 'tis the *inward* ſentiments that *I have* of *myſelf*, that *raiſe* or *deject* me; and my *mind* can no more be pleaſed with any *ſenſation* but its *own*, than the *body* can

can be gratified by the relishes of *another's palate.*

5. The more *insensible* a *sinner* grows, the more *intolerable* is the *disorder* and *distraction* which *sin* produces in his affairs. While men are under any little restraints of *conscience*; while they are held in by *scruples*, and *fears*, and *fits* of *regret*; while, in a word, they *sin* with any *modesty*, so long *sin* will tolerably comport with their *interest* and *reputation*; but as soon as they grow *insensible* and *impudent*, they pass all *bounds*, and there is nothing so *dear* and *considerable* to them, which they will not *sacrifice* to their *wickedness*. Now wife and children, friends, estate, laws, vows, compacts, oaths, are no *stronger ties* to them than *Sampson's withes*, or *cords*. Such a one as *this* is very well *described* in the *prophet*; *Thou art a swift dromedary, traversing her ways; a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?* Jer. ii. 23 And again, he is fitly represented to an *horse rushing into the battel.* He has as much *contempt* for his *safety* and *happiness*, as for *reason* and *religion*; he defies *shame*, *ruin*, and *death*, as much as he does *God* and *providence*: in one word, with an impudent and lewd *stupidity* he makes all the *haste* he can to be *undone*; and since he *will* be so, it were well

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if he could be undone *alone*. I am ſure we have too *many* inſtances at *this day* of the miſerable and fatal *effects* of *atheiſm* and *deiſm*, to leave any room to doubt whether I have *ſtrained* the point here or no.

Upon the whole it does appear, that *ſin* is a *great evil*; and that the *evil* of it is not *leſſened*, but *increaſed* by *obduration*. And from hence the *propoſition* inferred does naturally *follow*, that *deliverance* from it is a *great good*; ſo *great*, that if we eſtimate it by the *evil* there is in *ſin*, *health* to the *ſick*, *liberty* to the *captive*, *day* to the benighted, weary, and wandering *traveller*; a *calm*, a *port* to *paſſengers* in a *ſtorm*; *pardon* to men *adjudged to death*, are but weak and imperfect *images* or *reſemblances* of it. A *diſeaſe* will at worſt terminate with the *body*, and *life* and *pain* will have an end *together:* but the *pain* that *ſin* cauſes will endure to all *eternity*; for the *worm dies not*, and *the fire will not be quenched*. The *error* of the *traveller* will be corrected by the approaching *day*, and his *wearineſs* refreſhed at the next *ſtage* he comes to; but he that errs impenitently from the *path of life*, is *loſt* for *ever:* when the *day of grace* is once *ſet* upon him, no *light* ſhall e'er *recall* his wandering *feet* into the *path of righteouſneſs and peace*; no *eaſe*, no *refreſhment* ſhall e'er

ever relieve his *toil* and *miſery*. Whilſt the *feet* of the *captive* are loaded with *fetters*, his *ſoul* may enjoy its trueſt *liberty*; and in the midſt of *dangers* and *dungeons*, like *Paul* and *Silas*, he may ſing *ſongs of praiſe and triumph*: but the *captivity of ſin* defiles, oppreſſes, and enſlaves the *mind*, and delivers up the miſerable man to thoſe *intolerable* and *endleſs* evils, which inexorable *juſtice* and almighty *wrath* inflicts upon *ingratitude* and *obſtinacy*. A *ſtorm* can but wreck the *body*, a frail and worthleſs *bark*; the *ſoul* will eſcape ſafe to *ſhore*, the *bleſſed* ſhore, where the happy *inhabitants* enjoy an undiſturbed, an everlaſting *calm*: but *ſin* makes *ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience*, and he that *periſhes* in it does but paſs into a *more miſerable* ſtate; *for on the wicked God will rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, ſtorm and tempeſt; this ſhall be their portion for ever.* Pſal. xi. And, *laſtly*, a *pardon* ſends back a *condemned criminal* to *life*, that is, to ſins and ſufferings, to toils and troubles, which *death*, if death were the *utmoſt* he had to fear, would have *freed* him from: but *he*, that is once *delivered* from *ſin*, is *paſs'd from death to life*; and from *this life* of *faith*, of *love*, of *hope*, ſhall ſoon paſs to another of *fruition* and *glory*.

§. 2. A

§. 2. A *second fruit* of *liberty* is *good works*. *Here* I will shew *two* things: *First*, and this but *briefly*, that the *works* of *righteousness* contribute mightily to our *happiness*; and that *immediately*. *Secondly*, That *deliverance* from *sin* removes the great *obstacles* and *impediments* of *righteousness*, and throws off that *weight* which would otherwise *encumber* and *tire* us in our *race*. 1. *Holiness* is no small *pleasure*, no small *advantage*, to him who is *exercised* therein. When *nature* is *renewed* and *restored*, the *works* of *righteousness* are properly and truly the *works of nature*: and to *do good* to *man*, and offer up our *praises* and *devotions* to *God*, is to gratify the *strongest* and most *delightful inclinations* we have. These indeed are at first *stifled* and *oppressed* by *original corruption*, *false principles*, and *vicious customs*: but when once *they* have broke through *these*, like *seeds* through the *earthy coats* they are enclosed and imprisoned in, and are impregnated, warmed, and cherished by an *heavenly influence*, they naturally shoot up into *good works*. *Virtue* has a celestial *original*, and a celestial *tendency*: *from* God it *comes*, and *towards* God it *moves*: and can it be *otherwise* than *amiable* and *pleasant*? *Virtue* is all *beauty*, all *harmony* and *order*; and therefore we may view and review, consider and reflect upon it with *delight*. It procures us the *favour*

vour of *God* and *man*; it makes our *affairs* naturally run *smoothly* and *calmly* on; and fills our minds with *courage*, *chearfulness*, and *good hopes*. In one word, *diversion* and *amusements* give us a *fanciful* pleasure; an *animal sensitive* life, a *short* and *mean* one: *sin*, a *deceitful*, *false*, and *fatal* one: only *virtue*, a *pure*, a *rational*, a *glorious*, and *lasting* one. And this is *enough* to be said *here*: the *loveliness* of *holiness* being a *subject* which ever and anon I have *occasion* to engage in.

2. I am *next* to shew, that *deliverance* from *sin* removes the *impediments* of *virtue*. This will easily be made out, by examining what influence *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of this world*, which are the *three* great principles or sources of *wickedness*, have upon the *several parts* of evangelical *righteousness*. 1. The *first part* is that, which contains *those duties* that more immediately relate to *our selves*. *These* are especially *two*, *sobriety* and *temperance*. By *sobriety*, I mean a serious and impartial examination of things; or such a state of mind as qualifies us for it. By *temperance*, I mean the moderation of our affections and enjoyments, even in lawful and allowed instances. From these proceed *vigilance*, *industry*, *prudence*, *fortitude*; or *patience* and *steadiness* of mind in the prosecution of what is best. Without *these*

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'tis in vain to expect, either *devotion* towards *God*, or *juſtice* and *charity* towards *man*. Nay, nothing *good* or *great* can be accompliſhed without them: ſince without them we have no ground to hope for, either the aſſiſtance of divine *grace*, or the protection and concurrence of divine *providence*. *Only* the *pure* and *chaſte* ſoul is a fit *temple* for the reſidence of the *Spirit*: and the *providence* of *God* watches over none, or at leaſt none have reaſon to expect it ſhould, but ſuch as are themſelves *vigilant* and *induſtrious*. But now, how repugnant to, how inconſiſtent with thoſe virtues, is that *infatuation* of *mind*, and that *debauchery* of *affections*, wherein *ſin* conſiſts? How incapable either of *ſobriety* or *temperance* do *ſelfiſhneſs*, *ſenſuality*, and the *love of this world*, render us? What a *falſe eſtimate* of things do they cauſe us to form? How *inſatiable* do they render us in our *deſire* of *ſuch* things, as have but *falſe* and *empty* appearances of good? And how imperiouſly do they precipitate us into thoſe *ſins*, which are the *pollution* and *diſhonour* of our nature? On the contrary, let man be but once *enlightened* by *faith*; let him but once come to believe, that his *ſoul* is *himſelf*, that he is *a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth*, that *heaven* is his *country*, and that to do *good works* is to *lay up his treaſure* in it; let him,

him, I ſay, but once believe *this*, and then, how *ſober*, how *temperate*, how *wiſe*, how *vigilant*, and *induſtrious* will he grow? And this he will ſoon be induced to *believe*, if he be not actually under the influence of vicious *principles* and vicious *cuſtoms*. When the *mind* is undeceived and diſabuſed, and the *affections* diſengaged, 'tis *natural* to man to think *calmly*, and to deſire and enjoy with a *moderation*, ſuited to *juſt* and *ſober* notions of worldly things: for *this* is to think and act as a *man*. A *ſecond part* of *holineſs* regards *God* as its immediate *object*, and conſiſts in the *fear* and *love* of *him*, in *dependance* and *ſelf-reſignation*, in *contemplation* and *devotion*. As to this, 'tis plain, that whoever is under the *dominion* of any *ſin*, muſt be an *enemy*, or at leaſt a *ſtranger* to it. The *infidel* knows no *God*; and the *wicked* will not, or dares not, approach one. Their *guilt*, or their averſion keeps them from it. *Selfiſhneſs*, *ſenſuality*, and the *love of the world*, are inconſiſtent with the *love of the Father*, and all the ſeveral *duties* we owe him: they *alienate* the minds of men from *him*, and ſet up *other* gods in his room. Hence the *covetous* are pronounced guilty of *idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. and the *luxurious* and *unclean* are ſaid to make *their belly their god*, and to *glory in their ſhame*, Phil. iii. 19. But as ſoon as a poor man diſcerns

cerns that he has set his heart upon *false* goods; as soon as he finds himself *cheated* and *deceived* in all his expectations by the *world*, and is convinced that *God* is his proper and his soveraign *good*; how natural is it to *turn* his desires and hopes from the *creature* upon the *Creator*? How natural is it to *contemplate* his *greatness* and *goodness*, to *thirst* impatiently for his *favour*, and *dread* his *displeasure*? And *such* a man will certainly make the *worship* of *God* a great part, at least, of the *business* and *employment* of *life*. With *this* he will *begin*, and with *this* he will *end* the day: nor will he rest *here*; his soul will be ever and anon *mounting* towards *heaven*, in *ejaculations*; and there will be scarce any *action*, any *event*, that will not *excite* him to *praise* and *adore God*, or engage him in some wise *reflections* on his *attributes*. But all *this*, will the *loose* and *atheistical* say, may be well *spared*; 'tis only a vain and idle *amusement*. *War* and *peace*, *business* and *trade*, have no *dependance* upon it; *kingdoms* and *common-wealths* may *stand* and *flourish*, and sensible *men* may be *rich* and *happy without* it. But to this I *answer*, *religion* towards *God*, is the *foundation* of all true *virtue* towards our *neighbour*. *Laws* would want the better part of their *authority*, if they were not enforced by an *awe of God*: the wisest *counsels* would have

have no *effect*, did not *virtue* and *religion* help to execute them: *kingdoms* and *common-wealths* would be *diſſolved*, and burſt to pieces, if they were not united and held in by *theſe bonds*: and *wickedneſs* would reduce the *world* to one great *ſolitude* and *ruin*, were it not *tempered* and *reſtrained*, not only by the *virtues* and *examples*, but by the *ſupplications* and *interceſſions* too, of *devout* men. Finally, This is an *objection* fit for none to make, but the *ſottiſh* and the *ignorant*; men of *deſperate confidence*, and *little knowledge*. For whoever is *able* to *conſider*, by what *motives mankind* has ever been wont to be moſt ſtrongly *affected*; by what *principles* the *world* has ever been *led* and *governed*; how great an intereſt even *ſuperſtition* has had, either in the *civilizing* and *reforming* barbarous nations, or the *martial* ſucceſſes of the firſt *founders* of *monarchies*, and the like; whoever, I ſay, is *able* to *reflect*, tho' but ſlightly, on theſe things, can never be ſo ſilly, as to demand what the *uſe* of *religion* is; or to imagine it *poſſible* to *root up* its *authority* in the world.

The *third part* of *holineſs* regards our *neighbour*; and conſiſts in the exerciſe of *truth*, *juſtice*, and *charity*. And *no-where* is the ill influence of *ſelfiſhneſs*, *ſenſuality*, and the *love of the world*, more notorious than *here*: for theſe rendring us *impatient*

and *insatiable* in our *desires*, *violent* in the *prosecution* of them, *extravagant* and *excessive* in our *enjoyments*; and the *things* of this *world* being *few* and *finite*, and unable to *satisfy* such *inordinate* appetites; we stand in *one another's* light, in *one another's* way to *profit* and *pleasures*, or, too often at least, *seem* to do so: and this must unavoidably produce a thousand *miserable consequences*. Accordingly, we daily see that these passions, *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of the world*, are the *parents* of *envy* and *emulation*, *avarice*, *ambition*, *strife* and *contention*, *hypocrisy* and *corruption*, *lewdness*, *luxury* and *prodigality*; but are utter *enemies* to *honour*, *truth* and *integrity*; to *generosity* and *charity*. To obviate therefore the mischievous *effects* of these vicious *principles*, *religion* aims at implanting in the world *others* of a *benign* and *beneficent* nature; *opposing* against the *love of the world*, *hope*; against *selfishness*, *charity*; and against *sensuality*, *faith*: and to the end the *different tendency* of these *different principles* may be the more conspicuous, I will briefly compare the *effects* they have in reference to our *neighbour*. *Selfishness* makes a man look upon the *world* as made for *him* alone; and upon *all* as his *enemies*, who do any way *interfere* with, or *obstruct* his *designs*: it *seals* up all our *treasures*; *confines* all our *care* and *thoughts*

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to our *private* interest, honour, or pleasure; *employs* all our *parts*, *power*, and *wealth*, and all our *time* too, in pursuit of our *particular* advantage. *Sensuality* tempts a man to *abandon* the care and concern for his *country*, his *friends* and *relations*, and *neglect* the *duties* of his *station*, that he may give himself to some sottish and dishonourable *vice*: it prevails with him to refuse *alms* to the poor, *assistance* to any publick or neighbourly good work, and even a *decent*, nay, sometimes a *necessary allowance* to his *family*, that he may waste and lavish out his fortune upon some vile and expensive *lust*. In a word, it makes him incapable of the fatigues of *civil business*; and much more of the hardships and hazards of *war*: so that instead of imitating the glorious example of *Uriah*, who would not suffer himself to be courted into the enjoyment even of *allowed* pleasures, nor indulge himself in the tenderness and caresses of a *wife* and *children*, while *Joab* and the armies of *Israel* were in the *field*; *he*, on the contrary, *dissolves* and *melts down* his life and fortune in *uncleanness* and *luxury*, the shame and burden of his country and his family, at a time when not only the *honour*, but the *safety* of his *country* lies at stake, and *prince* and *people* defend it by their *toil* and *blood*. What should I mention the

love of the world? Are not the *effects* of it as viſible amongſt us, as *deplorable?* Does not this, where-ever it reigns, fill all places with *bribery* and *corruption*, *falſhood*, *treachery*, and *cowardiſe? Worſe cannot* be ſaid on't, and *more needs* not: for what *ſocieties* can *thrive*, or which way can *credit* and *reputation* be *ſupported?* What *treaſures*, what *counſels*, what *armies*, what *conduct*, can ſave a people, where theſe *vices* prevail? Let us now, on the other ſide, ſuppoſe *ſelfiſhneſs*, *ſenſuality*, and the *love of the world*, caſhiered; and *faith*, *hope* and *charity* entertained in their room; what a bleſſed *change* will this effect in the world? How ſoon will *honour* and *integrity*, *truth* and *juſtice*, and a *publick ſpirit* revive? How ſerviceable and *eminent* will theſe render *every* man in his *charge? Theſe* are the true *principles* of great and brave *actions: theſe*, theſe alone, can render our *duty* dearer to us than any *temporal* conſideration: theſe will enable us to do *good works*, without an eye to the *return* they will make us: theſe will make it appear to us very reaſonable, to *ſacrifice* fortune, life, every thing, when the *honour* of *God* and *publick good*, demand it of us. The *belief* and *hope* of *heaven* is a ſufficient *encouragement* to *virtue*, when all others fail: the *love of God*, *as our ſupreme good*, will make

make us eaſily *ſurmount* the conſideration of *expence*, *difficulty* or *hazard*, in ſuch attempts as we are ſure will *pleaſe* him; and the *love of our neighbour as our ſelves* will make us *compaſſionate* to his *evils* and *wants*, *tender* to his *infirmities*, and *zealous* of *his good* as of *our own*. How *happy* then would *theſe* principles make the *world?* And how much is it the *intereſt* of *every* one to *encourage* and *propagate theſe*, and to *diſcountenance* and *ſuppreſs* the *contrary* ones? I have done with the *ſecond effect* of *Chriſtian Liberty*; and will paſs on to the *third*, as ſoon as I have made *two remarks* on this laſt *paragraph*. *Firſt*, 'Tis very evident from what has been ſaid in it, that ſolid *virtue* can be *grafted* on no *ſtock*, but that of *religion:* that *univerſal righteouſneſs* can be raiſed on none but *goſpel principles*; who is *he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt?* 1 John v. 5. I do not *oppoſe* this *propoſition* againſt *Jew* or *Gentile*. *God* vouchſafed *in ſundry times and in divers manners*, ſuch *revelations* of his *truth*, and ſuch *communications* of his *grace*, as he ſaw fit: and to *theſe* is their *righteouſneſs* therefore, *whatever* it was, to be *attributed*; not to the *law* of *nature* or *Moſes*. But I *oppoſe* it againſt the *bold* pretenſions of *libertines* and *atheiſts* at *this day*. *Honour* and *juſtice* in *their* mouths is a vain *boaſt*; and the

natural power they pretend to over their *own* actions, to *square* and *govern* them according to the rules of *right reason*, is only a *malicious* design to *supplant* the *honour* of divine *grace*; and is as *false* and *groundless* as *arrogant*. Alas! they talk of a *liberty* which they do not *understand*: for did they but once admit *purity* of heart into their *notion* of it, they would soon discern what *strangers* they are to it. How is it possible, but that *they* should be the servants of the *body*, who reject and disbelieve the *dignity* and *pre-eminence* of the *soul*? How is it possible, *they* should not be *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*, who either believe *no God*, or *none* that *concerns* himself much about us? And how can they chuse but be *selfish* and *sensual*, and doat upon this *world*, who expect *no better*, who believe *no other*? Take away *Providence* and a *life to come*, and what can *oblige* a man to any *action*, that shall *cross* his temporal *interest* or his *pleasure*? What shall *reward* his *espousing virtue*, when it has no *dowry*, but *losses*, *reproaches* and *persecutions*? What shall *curb* him in the career of a *lust*, when he may *commit* it, not only with *impunity*, but, as the world sometimes goes, with *honour* and *preferment* too? Though, therefore, such men as these may possibly restrain their *outward actions*, yet are they all the while

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enslaved and *defiled* in their *affections*; and the very *liberty* they boast of in their *conduct* and *management* of *themselves openly*, springs from their *secret servitude* to some vile *passion*, or other. Nor yet can I be so soft and easy as to grant, that *such men* as these either do or can *arrive* at the *liberty* they pretend to: I mean, that of *regulating* and *governing* all their *outward actions* by the rules of *virtue*. They too often throw off the *disguise*, which either *hypocrisy* or *enmity to religion* makes them put on; and *prove* too plainly to the world, that when they lay *restraints* on themselves in *this* or *that sin*, 'tis only to *indulge* themselves the more *freely* and *securely* in *others*. *Secondly*, My *next* remark is, that it is gross stupidity, or impudence, to *deny* a *providence* and *another world*, when the *belief* of *both* is so indispensably *necessary* to the well-being of *this*. The frame and nature of *man*, and the necessities of *this world* require *both*. Without these, *selfishness* must undoubtedly be the *predominant* principle. This would breed unreasonable *desires*; and these would fill us with *fears* and *jealousies*: so that a *state of nature* would indeed be a *state of war*; and our *enmity* against one another would *not* be *extinguished* by civil *society*; but only *concealed* and *restrained*, till a fit *occasion* for its breaking out should present

it ſelf: *laws* would want that *force*, *common-wealths* that *bond* or *cement*, *converſation* that *confidence*, and our *poſſeſſions* that *ſecurity* which is neceſſary to render them *bleſſings* to us.

§. 3. A *third fruit* of *Chriſtian Liberty* is that *relation* which it creates between *God* and *us*. We are no longer *of the world*, but are *ſeparated* and *ſanctified*, *devoted* and *dedicated* to *God*. Thus St. *Peter*, 1 Epiſt. ii. 9. *Ye are a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* And thus St. *Paul*, Rom. viii. 15, 16. *Ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit it ſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt.* *God* is *our God*; *we* are *his people*. *He* is *our Father*, and *we* are *his children*, we are *ingrafted* into *his family*. The *conſequence* of this is, his *dearly beloved* and *only begotten Son* is our *Advocate at his right-hand*, the *Propitiation for our ſins*, and *Interceſſor* for us. His *Spirit* reſides with us to *comfort* and *aſſiſt* us; his *angels* guard us, and miniſter to us; for we are no longer the *object* of his *wrath*, but of his *love* and *care*. How does the *apoſtle* triumph on *this* argument, *Heb.* xii. 18,

18, 19, &c. *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackneſs and darkneſs, and tempeſt, and the ſound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they who heard, intreated that the word ſhould not be ſpoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded; and if ſo much as a beaſt touch the mountain it ſhall be ſtoned, or thruſt through with a dart: and ſo terrible was the ſight, that Moſes ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect: and to Jeſus, the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel.* And thus again, 1 *Cor.* iii 2. *Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's.* Theſe are *great* and *glorious* things. What *dignity* and *eminence* does this *adoption* raiſe us to? What *bleſſedneſs* flows from *communion* and *fellowſhip* with *God?* What can we *want*,

want, or what can we *fear*, when we have ſo mighty an *intereſt* in the *Soveraign of heaven and earth*; when all his divine *Perfections* are employed to promote and ſecure our *happineſs*? *Now* ſure we may *rejoice*, *now* we may *glory* and *triumph*; for certainly *all things* muſt *work together for our good*. But as *fallen angels* envied the *happineſs* of *new-created man*; ſo do *apoſtate* and *debauched men* envy that of the *godly*. And one of theſe will be apt to *ſay*, hold, *Sir*, you run too *faſt*; theſe glorious *privileges* are yet but in *embryo*, and all your *happineſs* is *yet* but in the *reverſion*: notwithſtanding all theſe big words, you muſt grant me that you are *yet* but in a *ſtate of probation*; that you are to undergo *hardſhips* and *difficulties*, and to live upon the thin diet of *hope* and *expectation*: and ſo I think I might take you down from *heirs* of God, to *ſervants* at the beſt. Well, I will grant, that we *yet live by faith*, and *wait for the hope of glory*: nor will I at *preſent* contend about *thoſe* pleaſures that are but in the *bud*: I will for once quit all that *preference* both as to *nobility* and *pleaſure*, which *adoption* and the full *aſſurance* of *hope* gives a *godly* man above a *ſinner*; and I will take the *ſtate* of *a child of God*, to *be* as the *objector* would have it; I will *ſuppoſe* him to be *under age* till he come to

another

another life; and to *differ nothing from a servant whilst* he is *so, though he be heir of all.* Yet after all, if I can prove that 'tis our *duty* to *serve God*, it will be no *contemptible fruit*, no *small commendation* of *liberty*, that it *enables* us to *do* our *duty*. And that it is our *duty* to *serve God*, is plain: for is it not fit that *he*, who *made* and still *upholds the world*, should *govern* it? ought we not to pay *obedience* to *his* laws, whose infinite *Perfections* and immense *beneficence* invest him with an absolute and uncontroulable *sovereignty* over us? *whom* should we *honour* with our *soul* and *body*, but *him* who is the *author* of *both*? to *whom* should we *devote* and *sacrifice* what we *have*, but to *him* from *whom* we *received* all? *whose praise* should we *shew forth*, but *his* who has *called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*? *whom* should we *obey* and *adore*, but *him* who has *translated us out of bondage* into *liberty*, out of the *servitude* of *Satan* into the *kingdom of his dear Son*; having *redeemed us* by the *blood* of *his Son* from that *wrath* to which our *sins* had deservedly *subjected* us? But this is not all; I shall prove it not only to be our *duty*, but our *honour* and our *happiness*, to *serve God*, even on the *supposition* on which the *objection* proceeds, and which I at *present grant*:

1. 'Tis our *honour* to *serve him* whom *angels*

gels ſerve, to *whom all things in heaven and in earth do bow and obey.* 'Tis the higheſt *prerogative* we can derive from *grace* or *nature*, to be *capable* of *ſerving him.* His divine *Perfections* tranſcend the *conceptions* of *inferiour creatures*, and can be *known*, *contemplated*, and *adored* by none, but ſuch as are *made but a little lower than the angels*; ſuch as are *endued*, not only with the *light* of *reaſon*, but with a far *brighter*, that of the *Spirit of God. This* is indeed *our* utmoſt *Perfection*, and muſt be our utmoſt *ambition: this* alone makes us *conſiderable*, who are in all *other* reſpects but *mean* and *contemptible*; for we draw but a *precarious* and *dependent* breath; and the *world* we inhabit is a *dark* and *tempeſtuous* one, full of *folly* and *miſery.* But even *this* will ſerve for a further *confirmation* of what I *further* contend for. For being *indigent* and *needy*, ſtanding at an *infinite* diſtance from *ſelf-ſufficiency*, 'tis plain that what we cannot find *within* us, we muſt ſeek *without* us. Some *all-ſufficient* good we muſt *find* out; *ſomething* we muſt *reſt* in, and *repoſe* our ſelves upon; and *this will* be our *God*, *this* we ſhall *ſerve* and *adore.* And *what* ſhall this *be?* ſhall we ſerve *evil ſpirits? theſe* are our avowed and inveterate *enemies*, and *go about like a roaring lion ſeeking whom they may devour.* Shall we ſerve the *good?*

this

this were to *diſhonour* our *nature*, to ſerve our *fellow-creatures* and *fellow-ſervants*: beſides, that *ſuch* will never *ſacrilegiouſly* uſurp their *Maker's honour*, nor *admit* that *ſervice* which is *due* to *him* alone. Shall we then ſerve *man?* alas! the *breath* of *great ones* is *in their noſtrils*; their *life is but a vapour*, toſſed to and fro with reſtleſs noiſe and motion; and then it *vaniſhes*; they *die*, and *all their thoughts and projects periſh*. What then; ſhall we at length be reduced to ſerve our *luſts?* this is worſe than *pagan idolatry*; *ſtocks and ſtones* indeed could not *help* or *reward* their *votaries*; but our *luſts*, like *wild* and *ſavage tyrants*, *deſtroy* where *they rule*, and oppreſs and overwhelm us with *ruins* and *miſchiefs*, while we *ſervilely* court and flatter them. I have not done *yet*: I have proved it indeed to be our *duty* and *honour* to *ſerve God*; but theſe with *ſome* are *cold* and *lifeleſs topicks*: I will now prove it to be our *intereſt* and *happineſs*; and this too, laying aſide at *preſent*, as I promiſed, the conſideration of a *future reward*, and the *joys* ſpringing *from* it. To make good this *aſſertion*, it will be neceſſary briefly to examine *two* things. *Firſt*, The *deſign* or *end*: and, *ſecondly*, The *nature* of *this ſervice*. If we enquire after the *end* of it, 'tis evidently our *own* advantage and happineſs. The

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lusts or the *humours*, the *wants* and *necessities* of man, may put *him* upon *invading* our *liberty*, or *purchasing* and *contracting* with us for our *servitude*: but *God* is *all-sufficient* to *himself*, and has no *need* of our *service*: when he will be *glorified* by *us*, 'tis that *we* may enjoy his *protection* and *bounty*: when he obliges us to *obey* his commands, 'tis in order to *perfect* our *natures*, and *purify* and *qualifie* us for the enjoyment of *spiritual* and *divine pleasure*: when he enjoins us *prayer*, 'tis because it does *exalt* and *enlarge* our minds, and *fit* us for the *blessings* it obtains: when he prescribes us *self-resignation*, 'tis because *he* will *chuse for* us, and *manage* our affairs *better* than *we* can our *selves*. Let us in the *next* place consider the *nature* of this service. To *serve God*, what is it, but to *love* what is *infinitely lovely*; to *follow* the conduct of *infinite wisdom*, and to repose our *confidence* in *that* being whose *goodness* is as *boundless* as his *power*? to *serve God*, 'tis to pursue the great *end* of our *creation*, to act consonant to the *dignity* of our *nature*, and to *govern* our *lives* by the dictates of an *enlightened reason*. How wisely has *our church* in one of her *collects* expressed her *notion* of the *nature* of *God's service*? *whose service is perfect freedom*. The *devil* maintains *his* dominion over us, by *infa-*

infatuating our *understandings*, by *enfeebling* and *fettering* our *wills*, by *deluding* and *corrupting* our *affections*: but on the quite *contrary*, the more *clear* and *impartial* our *understandings*, the more *free* and *absolute* our *wills*, the more *unbyass'd* and *rational* our *affections*, the *fitter* are we to *worship God*; nay indeed, we *cannot* worship him at all as we *ought* to do, *unless* our souls be *thus* qualified. Therefore is the *service of God* called a *rational service*, λογικὴ λατρεία: and the *word of God* is called ἄδολον γάλα, *sincere milk*; to signify to us, that in the *service of God* all is *real* and *solid* good. *Such* is the *Perfection* of *our natures*; the *might* and *joy* of *the Spirit*; the *protection* and *conduct* of *Providence*; and all the great and precious *promises* of *God in Christ* are *Yea* and *Amen*. But in the *service* of *sin* all is *cheat* and *imposture*; and under a pompous *shew* of *good*, the *present* is *vanity*, and the *future*, *repentance*; but such a *repentance* as does not *relieve*, but *increase* the sinners *misery*.

This is *enough* to be said of the *nature* of *God's service*: and by the *concessions* I made my *objector* about the *beginning* of this *head*, I am *restrained* from taking notice of the *more glorious effects* of it: yet *some* there are, very *great* and *good* ones, that fall *not* within the compass of the *objection*, which

which I will but juſt *mention*. The *firſt* is *reſt*. While *religion* regulates the *diſorder*, and reduces the *extravagance* of our *affections*, it does in effect *lay a ſtorm*, and *compoſe a mutiny* in our *boſoms*. Whilſt it *enlightens* our minds, and teaches us the true *value*, that is, at leaſt the comparative *worthleſneſs* of *worldly* things, it *extinguiſhes* the *troubles* which *preſent* diſappointments and loſſes, and *prevents* thoſe *fears* which the proſpect of *future* changes and revolutions is wont to create in us. A *mind* that is truly *enlightened*, and has no *ambition* but for *immortality* and *glory*, whoſe *humility* with reference to theſe *temporal* things is built upon a *true* notion of the *nature* of them; *this* ſoul has entered *already* into its *reſt*. *This* is the *doctrine* of our *Lord* and *Maſter*, Matt. xi. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*; that is, all ye that are oppreſſed by the *weight* of your own *cares* and *fears*, that are *fatigued* and *toiled* in the deſigns and projects of *avarice* and *ambition*, *and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*; *and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls*. I need not, I think, here ſhew, that the *more* we *fear* and *ſerve God*, the *more* we *love* and *admire him*, the *more clear* is the *underſtanding*, and the *more pure* the *heart*: for the *more* we converſe with *ſolid* and *eternal* good,

good, the more *inſignificant* and *trifling* will *temporal* things appear to us; and, the *more* the mind *rejoyces in the Lord*, *the oftner* 'tis *rapt up* into *heaven*, and, as it were, *transfigured* into a *more glorious* being, by the *joy of the ſpirit*, and the *ardors* of *divine love*; the more *flat* and *inſipid* are all *earthly* and *carnal* ſatisfactions to it. *Another effect* that attends our *ſhaking off* the *dominion of ſin*, and our *devoting* our ſelves to the *ſervice of God*, is our being *purified* from *guilt*. The *ſtains* of the *paſt* life are waſhed off by *repentance* and the *blood* of *Jeſus*; and the *ſervant* of *God* contracts no *new* ones by *wilful* and *preſumptuous* ſin. *Now* therefore he can *enter* into *himſelf*, and *commune* with his own *heart*, without any *uneaſineſs*; he can *reflect* upon his *actions*, and *review* each *day* when it is *paſt*, without inward *regret* or *ſhame*. To *break off* a *vicious* courſe; to *vanquiſh* both *terrors* and *allurements*, when they perſuade to that which is *mean* and *baſe*; to be *maſter* of one's *ſelf*, and *entertain* no *affections*, but what are *wiſe*, and *regular*, and *ſuch* as one has reaſon to *wiſh* ſhould daily *increaſe* and grow *ſtronger*; *theſe* are things ſo far from meriting *reproach* and *reproof* from one's *own mind*, that they are ſufficient to *ſupport* it againſt *all reproaches* from *without*. Such is the *beauty*, ſuch the *pleaſure* of a well eſtabliſhed *habit* of *righteouſneſs*, that

it does *more* than *compensate* the *difficulties* to which either the *attainment* or the *practice* of it can expose a man. *Lastly*, He that is *free* from *guilt*, is *free* from *fear* too. And indeed *this* is the *only* way to get *rid* of *all* our *fears*; not by *denying* or *renouncing God*, with *atheists*; but by *doing the things that please him*. He that is truly *religious*, is the *only* man who upon *rational* ground is raised above *melancholy* and *fear*: for *what* should he *fear*? *God is* his *glory*, his *boast*, his *joy*, his *strength*; and, if *God be for him, who can be against him? neither things present, nor to come; neither life, nor death, can separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus*. There is *nothing* within the bounds of *time* or *eternity* that he needs *fear*. *Man* cannot *hurt* him; he is *encompassed with the favour and loving-kindness of God, as with a shield*. But if *God* permit him to *suffer* for *righteousness* sake, *happy* is he; this does but *increase* his *present joy*, and *future glory*. But what is most *considerable*, *death* itself cannot *hurt* him, *devils* cannot *hurt* him; *the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*. For *there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*. These *considerations* prove *the present* condition of a *servant of God happy*: happy

happy in *comparison* of the *loose* and *wicked*; but in *comparison* with what he *shall* be *hereafter*, he is infinitely *short* of the *joy* and *glory* of his *end*. In *this* respect indeed he is *yet* in a *state* of *tryal* and *trouble*, of *discipline* and *probation*; in *this* respect his *perfection* and *happiness* do but just *peep* up above the *ground*; the *fulness* and *maturity* of *both* he *cannot* enjoy till he come to *heaven*. And *this* is,

§. 4. The *last fruit* of *Christian liberty*. That *heaven* will consist of *all* the *blessings*, of *all* the *enjoyments* that *human nature*, when raised to an *equality* with *angels*, is *capable* of; that *beauties* and *glories*, *joys* and *pleasures*, will as it were, like a *fruitful* and *ripe* harvest *here*, grow up *there* in *all* the *utmost plenty* and *perfection* that *Omnipotence* itself will e'er produce, is not at all to be *controverted*. *Heaven* is the *masterpiece* of *God*, the *accomplishment* and *consummation* of *all* his wonderful *designs*, the *last* and *most endearing* expression of *boundless love*. And hence it is, that the *Holy Spirit* in *scripture* describes it by the *most taking* and the *most admired* things upon *earth*; and yet we cannot but think that this *image*, tho' drawn by a *divine pencil*, must fall infinitely *short* of it: for what *temporal* things can yield *colours* or *metaphors strong* and *rich* enough to *paint heaven* to the *life*? *One* thing there is indeed,

which seems to point us to a *just* and *adequate notion* of an *heaven*; it seems to excite us to *strive* and *attempt* for *conceptions* of what we cannot *grasp*, we cannot *comprehend*; and the *labouring* mind, the *more* it *discovers*, *concludes* still the *more behind*; and *that* is, *the beatific vision. This* is that, which, as *divines* generally *teach*, does *constitute heaven*; and *scripture seems* to *teach* so *too*. I confess, I have often *doubted*, whether our *seeing God* in the *life to come*, did necessarily *imply* that *God* should be the *immediate object* of our *fruition*: or only, that we should *there*, as it were, *drink* at the *fountain-head*; and being *near* and *dear* to *him* in the *highest degree*, should ever *flourish* in his *favour*, and *enjoy* all good, *heap'd up*, *press'd down*, *and running over*. I thought the *scriptures* might be easily *reconciled* to *this* sense; and the *incomprehensible glory* of the *divine Majesty* inclined me to believe it the most *reasonable*, and most easily *accountable*. *Enjoyment*, and especially where an *intelligent* Being is the *object* of it, seemed to *imply* something of *proportion*, something of *equality*, something of *familiarity*. But ah! *what proportion*, thought I, *can* there ever be between *finite* and *Infinite?* what *equality* between a *poor creature* and his *incomprehensible Creator?* What *eye* shall gaze on the *splendors* of his *essential beauty*, when the very *light he dwells in*

is

is *inacceſſible*, and even the *brightneſs* he *veils* himſelf *in*, is too *dazling* even for *cherubs* and *ſeraphs*, for ought I know, to behold? Ah! *what familiarity* can *there* be between this *eternal* and *inconceivable Majeſty*, and *beings* which he has formed out of *nothing?* and when on this occaſion I reflected on the *effects* which the *preſence* of *angels* had upon the *prophets*, and ſaw *human nature* in *man ſinking* and *dying* away, becauſe unable to ſuſtain the *glory* of one of their *fellow-creatures*, I thought myſelf in a manner obliged to *yield*, and ſtand *out* no *longer* againſt a *notion*, which, though *differing* from what was generally *received*, ſeemed to have *more reaſon* on its ſide, and to be *more intelligible*. But when I called to mind, that *God* does not diſdain, even while we are in a *ſtate* of *probation* and *humility*, of *infirmity* and *mortality*, to account us not only his *ſervants* and his *people*, but his *friends* and his *children*; I began to *queſtion* the *former* opinion: and when I had ſurveyed the *nature* of *fruition*, and the various *ways* of it a little more *attentively*, I wholly *quitted* it. For I obſerved, that the *enjoyment* is *moſt tranſporting*, where *admiration* mingles with our *paſſion:* where the beloved *Object* ſtands not upon the ſame *level* with us, but *condeſcends* to meet a *virtuous* and *aſpiring*, and *ambitious affection*. *Thus* the happy *favou-*

rite enjoys a *gracious master*: and *thus* the *child* does with *respectful love* meet the *tenderness* of his *parent*: and the *wisdom* and *virtue*, which sometimes raises some *one* happy *mortal above* the *common* size and height of *mankind*, does not surely *diminish*, but *increase* the *affection* and the *pleasure* of his *friends* that enjoy him. *Again*, the *nature* of *enjoyment* varies, according to the various *faculties* of the *soul*, and the *sense* of the *body*. *One* way we enjoy *truth*, and *another goodness*: *one* way *beauty*, and *another harmony*: and so on. These things considered, I saw there was no necessity, in order to make *God* the *object* of our *fruition*, either to *bring him* down to any thing *unworthy* of his *glory*, or to *exalt* our *selves* to a *height* we are utterly *uncapable* of. I easily saw, that we, who *love* and *adore God here*, should, when we enter into his *presence*, *admire* and *love* him *infinitely more*. For *God* being *infinitely amiable*, the *more* we *contemplate*, the *more clearly* we *discern* his *divine perfections* and *beauties*, the *more* must our *souls* be *inflamed* with a *passion* for *him*: And I have no reason to doubt, but that *God* will make us the most gracious *returns* of *our love*, and express *his* affections for *us*, in such *condescensions*, in such *communications* of *himself*, as will transport us to the *utmost* degree that *created* beings are *capable* of.

Will

Will not *God*, that *sheds abroad his love in our hearts* by his *Spirit here*, fully *satisfy it hereafter?* Will not *God*, who *fills us here* with the *joy* of his *Spirit*, by I know not what *inconceivable* ways, *communicate* himself in a more *ravishing* and *ecstatick* manner to us, when *we* shall *behold him as he is*, and live for ever *incircled* in the *arms* of his *love* and *glory?* Upon the whole then, I cannot but believe, that the *beatific Vision* will be the *supreme* pleasure of *heaven:* yet I do not think that this is to *exclude* those of an *inferior* nature. *God* will be there, not only *all*, but *in* all. *We shall see him as he is*; and we shall *see* him *reflected*, in *angels*, and *all* the *inhabitants* of *heaven*; nay, in *all* the various *treasures* of that *happy place:* but in far more *bright* and *lovely* characters than in his *works* here *below*. *This* is a state, now, that answers *all ends*, and satisfies *all appetites*, let them be never so *various*, never so *boundless*. *Temporal* good, nay a state *accumulated* with all temporal goods, has still something *defective*, something *empty* in it: *That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbred.* And therefore *the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing: but all things are full of labour; man cannot utter it.* And if *this* were *not* the *state* of *temporal* things, yet that *one* thought of *Solomon* that *he* must *leave*

them, makes *good* the *charge* of *vanity and vexation:* and the *contrary* is that which compleats *heaven*; namely, that it is *eternal.* Were *heaven* to have an *end*, that *end* would make it *none*. *That death* would be as much *more intolerable* than *this* here, as the *joys* of *heaven* are *above* those of *earth.* For the *terror*, and the *evil* of it, would be to be estimated, by the *perfection* of that *nature* and *happiness* which it would put an *end* to. To *dye* in *paradise*, amidst a *crowd* of *satisfactions*, how much *more intolerable* were this, than to *dye* in those *accursed regions* that breed continually *briars* and *brambles*, *cares* and *sorrows?* And now, I doubt not, but every one will readily acknowledge, that an *heaven*, were it *believed*, were *such* a *fruit* of *Christian Liberty*, *such* a *motive* to it, as *none* could *resist.* Did I *believe* this, have I heard *one* say, I would *quit* my *trade*, and all *cares* and *thoughts* of *this* world; and *wholly* apply my self to get that *other* you talk of. There was no *need* of going *thus* far: but this shews *what* the *natural influence* of this doctrine of a *life to come* is; and that it is generally owing to *infidelity*, where 'tis *frustrated* and *defeated. What* is in *this* case to be *done?* What *proof*, what *evidences*, are sufficient to beget *faith* in *him*, who rejects *Christianity* and all *divine revelation? He that hears not Moses and the prophets, Christ* and his *apostles,*

ſtles, neither will he believe though one roſe from the dead. This *doctrine* of a *life to come* was generally *believed* by the *Gentile* world. It was indeed very much *obſcured*, but never *extinguiſhed*, by the *addition* of many *fabulous* and *ſuperſtitious* fancies; ſo *ſtrong* was the *tradition* or *reaſon*, or rather *both*, on *which* 'twas *built*. The *Jews* univerſally *embraced* it. The general *promiſes* of *God* to *Abraham and his ſeed*, and the ſeveral *ſhadows* and *types* of it in the *Moſaic* inſtitution, did *confirm* them in the *belief* of a *doctrine*, which I do not doubt, had been *tranſmitted* to them even from *Enoch*, *Noah*, and *all* their pious *anceſtors*. Nor muſt we look upon the *Sadducees* amongſt the *Jews*, or the *Epicureans* amongſt the *Gentiles*, to be any *objection* againſt this *argument* of a *life to come*, founded in *tradition* and the univerſal *ſenſe* of *mankind:* becauſe *they* were not only *inconſiderable*, compared to the *body* of the *Jewiſh* or *Pagan* world, but alſo *deſerters* and *apoſtates* from the *philoſophy* and *religion* received. To what end ſhould I proceed from the *Gentile* and *Jew* to the *Chriſtian?* Were *Chriſtianity* entertained as it *ought*, the very *ſuppoſal* of any *doubt* concerning *a life to come* would be *impertinent*. *Here* we have numerous *demonſtrations* of it. Not only the *fortune* of *virtue* in *this* life, which is often very *calamitous*, but even the *origin* and *nature* of

of it, do plainly evince a *life to come*. For to *what* end can the *mortification* of the *body*, by *abstractions* and *meditations*, be enjoyned, if there be *no life to come*? What *need* is there of *renovation*, or *regeneration*, by the *Word* and *Spirit of God*, were there *no life to come*? One would think, the *common* end of this *natural* life might be well enough *secured* upon the *common* foundation of *reason* and *human laws*. What should I here add, the *love* of *God*, and the *merits* of *Jesus*? from *both* which we may derive many *unanswerable* arguments of a *life to come*. For though, when we reflect upon it, it appears as much above *our merit*, as it is above our *comprehension*; yet when we consider, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*; what less than an *heaven* can we expect from an *infinite merit* and *almighty love*? The *love* of *God* must be *perfect* as *himself*: and the *merits* of *Jesus* must be estimated by the *greatness* of his *Person*, and his *sufferings*. *He* that cannot be *wrought upon by these* and the like *gospel arguments*, will be found, I doubt, *impenetrable* to all *others*. 'Tis in *vain* to argue with *such* a one from *natural topicks*: and therefore I will *stop* here.

I should now pass on to the *third* thing, the *attainment* of *Christian Liberty*: but this *chapter* is grown much too *big* already: and

and to the consideration of the *fruit* of *this liberty*, which I have so long insisted on, nothing *more* needs to be added, but the observation of those *rules*, which I shall lay down in the *following* chapters. For *whatever* advice will *secure* the several *parts* of our *liberty*, will consequently secure the *whole*. I will therefore *close* this *chapter* here; with a brief *exhortation*, to endeavour after *deliverance* from *sin*. How *many* and *powerful motives* have we to it? Would we free our selves from the *evils* of *this* life? let us dam up the *source* of them, which is *sin*. Would we surmount the *fear* of *death*? let us *disarm* it of *its sting*, and that is *sin*. Would we *perfect* and *accomplish* our *natures* with all *excellent* qualities? 'tis *righteousness* wherein consists the *image of God*, and *participation* of the *divine nature*: 'tis the *cleaning our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and the perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, that must *transform us from glory to glory*. Would we be masters of the most glorious *fortunes*? 'tis *righteousness* that will make us *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*: 'tis the *conquest* of our *sins*, and the *abounding in good works*, that will make us *rich towards God*, and *lay up for us a good foundation for the life to come*. Are we ambitious of *honour*? let us *free* our selves from the *servitude* of *sin*.

'Tis

'Tis *virtue* only, that is truly *honourable* and *praiſe-worthy*: and *nothing* ſurely can entitle us to ſo *noble* a *relation*: for this *allies* us to *God*. For, as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *they* only are the *children of Abraham, who do the works of Abraham*; the *children* of *God*, who *do* the *works* of *God*. Theſe are *they*, who are *born again: not of the will of the fleſh, or of the will of man*; *but of God*. Theſe are *they*, who are *incorporated into the body of Chriſt*; and being *ruled* and *animated* by *his Spirit*, are *entitled* to all the bleſſed *effects* of *his merit* and *interceſſion*. Theſe are *they*, in a word, who have *overcome*, and *will*, one day, *ſit down with Chriſt in his throne*; *even as he alſo overcame, and is ſet down with his Father in his throne*, Rev. iii. 21. Good God! how *abſurd* and *perverſe* all our *deſires* and *projects* are! we complain of the *evils* of the *world*; and yet we *hug* the *cauſes* of them, and *cheriſh* thoſe *vices*, whoſe *fatal* wombs are ever big with numerous and intolerable *plagues*. We *fear death*, and would get *rid* of this *fear*, not by *diſarming*, but *ſharpening* its *ſting*; not by *ſubduing*, but *forgetting* it. We *love wealth* and *treaſure*: but 'tis that which is *temporal*, not *eternal*. *We receive honour of one another*; *but we ſeek not that which comes from God only*. We are fond of *eaſe* and *pleaſure*; and at the

the ſame time we *wander* from thoſe *paths* of *wiſdom*, which alone can *bring* us to it. For, in a word, 'tis this *Chriſtian Liberty* that makes men *truly free:* not the being in bondage to *no man*, but to *no ſin:* not the doing what we *liſt*, but what we *ought*. 'Tis *Chriſtian Liberty* that makes us *truly great*, and *truly glorious:* for this alone renders us *ſerviceable* to *others*, and *eaſy* to our *ſelves*; *benefactors* to the *world*, and *delightſome* at *home*. 'Tis *Chriſtian Liberty* makes us *truly proſperous*, truly *fortunate*; becauſe it makes us *truly happy*, *filling us with joy and peace*, and *making us abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghoſt.*

CHAP. IV.

Of liberty, as it relates to original ſin. The nature of which conſidered chiefly with reſpect to its corruption. *How far this diſtemper of nature is curable. Which way this cure is to be effected.*

WHatever difficulties the doctrine of original ſin really be involved in, or ſeem at leaſt to ſome to be ſo, they will not concern me, who am no further obliged to conſider it, than as it is an impediment of Perfection: for though there be

be much diſpute about original ſin, there is little or none about original *corruption*; the *reality* of this is generally acknowledged, though the *guilt*, the ſinfulneſs or immorality of it, be controverted. And though here be diverſity of opinions concerning the effects of original *corruption* in eternity; yet there is no doubt at all made but that it incites and inſtigates us to actual ſin, and is the ſeed-plot of human folly and wickedneſs. All men, I think, are agreed, that there is a byaſs and ſtrong propenſion in our nature towards the things of the world, and the body: that the ſubordination of the body to the ſoul, and of the ſoul to God, wherein conſiſts righteouſneſs, is ſubverted and overthrown: that we have appetites which claſh with, and oppoſe the commands of God; not only when they threaten violence to our nature, as in the caſes of confeſſion and martyrdom, but alſo when they only prune its luxuriancy and extravagance: that we do not only deſire ſenſitive pleaſure, but even to that degree, that it hurries and tranſports us beyond the bounds that reaſon and religion ſet us: we have not only an averſion for pain, and toil, and death; but to that exceſs, that it tempts us to renounce God, and our duty, for the ſake of carnal eaſe, and temporal ſafety. And finally,

finally, that we are so backward to entertain the belief of revealed truths, so prone to terminate our thoughts on, and confine our desires within this visible world as our portion, and to look upon our selves no other than the mortal and corruptible inhabitants of it; that this makes us selfish and sordid, proud and ambitious, false, subtle, and contentious, to the endless disturbance of mankind and our selves. That this, I say, is the state of nature; that this is the corruption we labour under, all men, I think, are agreed: and no wonder; for did a controversy arise about this, there would be no need to appeal any farther for the decision of it, than to one's own experience; this would tell every one that thus it is in fact; and reason, if we will consult it, will tell us why it is so: for what other than this can be the condition of man, who enters the world with a soul so dark and destitute of divine light, so deeply immersed and plunged into flesh and blood, so tenderly and intimately affected by bodily sensations; and with a body so adapted and suited to the things of this world, and fastned to it by the charms of pleasure, and the bonds of interest, convenience and necessity? This account of original corruption agrees very well with *that* St. *Paul* gives

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us of it, *Rom.* vii. and elſewhere: and with that aſſertion of our *Lord* and *Maſter*, on which he builds the neceſſity of *regeneration* by *water* and the *Holy Spirit*, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.* Having thus briefly explained what I mean in this chapter by *original ſin*, I am next to conſider theſe two things.

1. How far this diſtemper of nature is curable.
2. Which way this cure is to be effected.

As to the firſt enquiry, I would not be underſtood to proceed in it with a regard to all the *regenerate* in general, but only to the *perfect*; for the ſtrength of original ſin cannot but be very different in new converts, or babes in grace, and in ſuch as are advanced to an habit of righteouſneſs. This being premiſed, I think, I may on good ground reſolve, that original ſin in the *perfect* man, may be ſo far reduced and maſtered, as to give him but very *rare* and *ſlight* diſturbance. This ſeems to me evident from the great change that muſt be wrought in him who is converted from a ſinner into a ſaint; *If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are paſt*

paſt away, behold all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. And it is hard to conceive this new nature, without new propenſions and inclinations, not only different from, but repugnant to our former original and corrupt ones; or at leaſt we muſt ſuppoſe this new creation ſo far to have reformed and corrected the man, that original corruption has loſt the ſtrength and force which before it had. This will be more clear yet, if we obſerve never ſo ſlightly, the ſeveral parts of this great change. Firſt, The ſoul of an excellent perſon is filled with an unfeigned and habitual ſorrow for, and deteſtation of all ſin; *I hate*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *every falſe way*. And how inconſiſtent is the ſtrength and heat of corrupt propenſions, with the tears and averſions of a true penitent? how tame is the body, how pure the mind, when the man is poſſeſſed with a firm and holy indignation againſt ſin, when he diſſolves in the pious tenderneſs of a contrite ſpirit! next, the ſoul of a good man is poſſeſſed with an ardent love of *God*, and of *Jeſus*; with a firm belief, and a ſteddy hope of a bleſſed eternity; with enlightened eyes he beholds the vanity of all earthly things, and admires the ſolidity, the weight, and duration of heavenly glory: *He is riſen with Chriſt*, and therefore *ſeeks thoſe things that are above, where Chriſt ſits on the right hand of God: He has ſet his affections on things above, and*

not on things on the earth; for he is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God. And must we not now suppose such a one cleansed and purified from all corrupt affections, when the very bent of his soul is quite another way? must we not suppose the force and strength of depraved nature, overpowered and subdued by these heavenly affections? how mortified must such a man be to the world and to the body? how feeble is the opposition, that inferiour nature can raise against a mind invested with so absolute and soveraign authority, and endowed with light and strength from above? Lastly, The perfect man has not only crucified the inordinate and sinful lusts and affections of the body, but has also obtained a great mastery, even over the *natural appetites* of it; how else can it be that his *desires* and *hopes* are in *heaven*; that he *waits for the Lord from thence*; that he desires to be *dissolved* and *to be with Christ*; and *groans* to *be rid* of the *corruptible tabernacle* of the *body?* he that is thus above the *body*, may certainly be concluded to be in some degree above even the most *natural appetites*. He that has set himself free in a great measure even from his aversion to death, and in his affection at least very much loosened the bond, the knot, that unites soul and body, may certainly very reasonably be presumed

perſumed to be much more above all coveteous, ambitious, or wanton inclinations. Theſe are the grounds, on which I attribute to the perfect man ſo high a degree of freedom from original ſin as I do in the propoſition laid down.

2dly, But yet I do not in the leaſt think, that the moſt perfect man upon earth can ſo extinguiſh the ſparks of original corruption, but that if he do not keep a watch and guard upon himſelf, they will gather ſtrength and revive again: and the reaſon of this is plain; becauſe it has a foundation in our very nature. The diſpute concerning the exiſtence of original corruption in us after baptiſm, or regeneration, is, methinks, a very needleſs one: for if it be about the notion we ought to entertain of it, that is, whether it be properly ſin or not, this is a contention about words; for what ſignifies it by what name we call this remainder of original pravity, when all grant, that the ſtain and guilt of it is waſhed off and pardoned? But if it be about the force and efficacy of it, this indeed is a controverſy of ſome moment; but a very fooliſh one on one ſide: for to what purpoſe can it be, to ſay a great many ſubtil and puzling things againſt a truth, that every man feels and experiments

at one time or other? Upon the whole then, I may thus deſcribe the liberty of the perfect man with reſpect to original ſin: he has *mortified* it, though not utterly *extirpated* it; he has *ſubdued* it, though not *exterminated* it; and therefore he is not only free from ſinful and inordinate luſts and affections, but alſo, in a far greater meaſure than other men, from thoſe infirmities and irregularities, which are, as it were, the ſtruglings and ebullitions of original ſin, not yet ſufficiently tamed. He has advanced his victory very far, even over his natural appetites; he has no ſtronger inclination for the body, or for the world, and the things of it, than ſuch as becomes a man that is poſſeſſed with a deep ſenſe of the vanity of this world, and the bleſſedneſs of another. The world is in a high degree crucified to him, and he counts all things but dung and droſs in compariſon with the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord. His ſorrows and his joys, his deſires and his fears, be the occaſion never ſo juſt or lawful, paſs not the modeſt bounds of a wiſe moderation. He deſires without impatience, cares and contrives, hopes and purſues, without anxiety or ſollicitude; he is cautious without fear and puſillanimity; he is ſad without dejection or deſpondency, and pleaſant without vanity. All this indeed ſhews him,

him, not only to have conquered ſin and folly, but in a great meaſure alſo his natural propenſion to them. But after all, this happy creature muſt remember, that he is ſtill in the body; in the body, whoſe appetites will ſoon paſs beyond their due bounds, if he be indulgent or careleſs: he muſt remember that he is not immutably holy, his underſtanding is not ſo clear and bright, but that it may be deceived; nor the bent of his affections ſo ſtrongly ſet upon good, but that they may be perverted; and therefore he muſt be ſober and vigilant, and fear always. Thus have I ſtated the curableneſs of our original corruption. And as I think I have plainly the countenance of ſcripture; ſo I do not ſee, that I in the leaſt claſh with that clauſe in the ninth article of our church, which affirms concerning original ſin thus: *And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the luſt of the fleſh, called in greek* Φρόνημα σαρκὸς, *which ſome do expound the wiſdom, ſome the ſenſuality, ſome the affection, ſome the deſire of the fleſh, is not ſubject to the law of God.* For this muſt not be underſtood ſurely, as if the fleſh did always luſt againſt the ſpirit in the regenerate, but only that the regenerate themſelves are liable and obnoxious to theſe luſtings; which, on ſuppoſal that the perfect man

were here thought upon by the compilers of this article, imports no contradiction to any thing I have delivered. The truth is, I have asserted no more concerning the curableness of original corruption, than what is necessary to secure the *interest* of *holiness*, as well as the *honour* of the *Word* and *Spirit*. I have too often had occasion to observe, that the stating our obligation to reduce original corruption too laxly, ministers not a little to the carnal confidence of supine and careless persons. How greedily do some imbibe, and how fond are they of this notion, that the flesh, even in the regenerate, does always lust against the Spirit? And the next thing is, to look upon their darling errors, as unavoidable infirmities, flowing from the incurable distemper of original sin. To the end therefore, that under colour and pretence of the impossibility of a perfect cure and restitution of our nature to perfect innocence and unspotted purity, we may not sit down contented in an impure state, and never advance to those degrees of health and innocence, which we may, and ought actually to arrive at; I think fit here, to guard the doctrine of original sin with this one general caution.

That we be very careful not to mistake contracted, for natural corruption; not to mistake a super-induced nature, defaced by all

all the slime and mud which popular errors and fashions leave upon it, for original nature, or nature in that state in which it enters the world. 'Tis, I doubt, a very hard thing to find but one arrived at any maturity of years, in whom nature is the same thing now that it was in the womb or the cradle; in whom there are no worse propensions than what necessarily flow from the frame and composition of his being. Alas! our original depravation, be it what it will, is very betimes improved by false principles and foolish customs; by a careless education, and by the blandishments and insinuations of the world: and every man is so partial to himself, that he is very willing to have his defect and errors pass under the name of natural and unavoidable ones, because this seems to carry in it its own apology. This is a fatal error, and continues men in their vices; nay, gives them peace in them too, to their lives end: for why should not a man forbear attempting what he despairs of effecting? To prevent which, I earnestly desire my reader to consider, that all who have treated this doctrine of original sin with any solidity or prudence, do carry the matter as far at least, as I have done: they teach not only, that original corruption may be *pruned* and *lopped*, but that

it may be *cut down*, *mortified*, and *dried up*. That, ſince no man can aſſure himſelf how far he may advance his conqueſt over his natural corruption, and the intereſt of every man's ſafety and glory obliges him to advance it as far as he can; he muſt never ceaſe fighting againſt it, while it fights againſt him. That, ſince every ſin is ſo far mortal as it is voluntary, and has as much guilt in it as freedom, every man ought to be extremely jealous, leſt he be ſubject to any vicious inclination, that is in reality the product, not of nature, but of choice. And laſtly, ſince tho' much leſs than habitual goodneſs may conſtitute a man in a ſtate of grace; yet nothing leſs can produce Perfection, or a conſtant aſſurance of eternal happineſs: therefore no man ought to acquieſce, while he ſees himſelf ſhort of this; and every man ſhould remember, that his goodneſs ought to conſiſt in a habit of thoſe virtues to which he is by nature the moſt averſe. I have now diſpatched my firſt enquiry, and reſolved how far original ſin is curable. The next is,

§. 2. How this cure may be effected. And here 'tis plain what we are to aim at in general: for if original righteouſneſs conſiſts, as I think it cannot be doubted, in the

the ſubordination of the body to the ſoul, and the ſoul to God; and original corruption, in the ſubverſion of this order; then the cure muſt conſiſt in reſtoring this ſubordination, by the weakning and reducing the power of the body, and by quickning and ſtrengthning the mind, and ſo re-eſtabliſhing its ſoveraignty and authority. The ſcriptures accordingly let us know that this is the great deſign of religion, and the great buſineſs of man, 1 *Cor.* ix. 25. *And every man that ſtriveth for the maſtery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.* And this St. *Paul* illuſtrates and explains by his own example, in the following Words: *I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection.* The preference given to the cares aud appetites of the body, or of the mind, is the diſtinguiſhing character which conſtitutes and demonſtrates man either holy or wicked: *They that are of the fleſh, do mind the things of the fleſh; and they that are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit,* Rom. viii. 5. And the threats of the goſpel belong to the ſervants of the fleſh, its promiſes to the ſervants of the Spirit: *For if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall dye; but if ye through the Spirit*

Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live, Rom. viii. 13. *He that ſoweth to his fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting*, Gal. vi. 8. I grant that in theſe places and elſewhere very commonly, as by the ſpirit is meant the mind enlightened and aided by the grace of God; ſo by the body or fleſh is meant our inferior nature; not juſt ſuch as it proceeds out of the womb, but as it is further depraved by a carnal and worldly converſation. However, ſince *original ſin* is the ſeed or root of *voluntary* or cuſtomary corruption, theſe texts do properly and directly enough ſerve to the confirmation of the doctrine for which they are alledged. This then is the great duty of man, this is the great end which he is always to have in his eye, the mortifying the body, and entirely ſubjugating it to the reaſon of the mind. Here the Chriſtian warfare muſt begin, and here end; for he, who has crucified the body with the luſts and affections thereof, has entred into reſt, as far as this life is capable of it: he, that lays the foundation of morals here, does build upon a rock; and he, that here puſhes his ſucceſs to the utmoſt point, has reached the higheſt round in the ſcale of Perfection, and given the finiſhing ſtrokes

to

to holineſs and virtue. This I ſay then; he that will be free, muſt lay down as a general rule to himſelf, from which he muſt reſolve never to ſwerve, that he is by all rational and poſſible methods to diminiſh the ſtrength and authority of the body, and increaſe that of the mind. By this we ought to judge of the conveniencies or inconveniencies of our worldly fortunes; by this we are to determine of the innocence or malignity of actions; by this we are to form and eſtimate our acquaintance and converſation, and by this we are to judge of the bent and tendency of our lives; by this we are to regulate our diverſions; by this we may reſolve of the nature and degree of our pleaſures, whether lawful, whether expedient, or not: and in one word, by this we may paſs a true ſentence upon the degrees and meaſures of our natural affections. There are many things that are in their own nature indifferent enough, that prove not ſo to me; and there is ſuch a latitude in the degrees and meaſures of duty and deviations from it, that it is a very hard matter in ſeveral caſes to define nicely and ſtrictly what is lawful or unlawful: but I am ſure, in all caſes this is a wiſe and ſafe rule, that we are to aim at the ſtrengthning the authority of our minds, and the weakning

weakning the force and power of our carnal appetites. By consequence, every man ought to examine himself, by what arts, by what practices the light of his understanding comes to be obscured, the authority of his reason weakened, and the tenderness of his conscience to be so much blunted and worn off: and when he has discovered this, he must avoid these things as temptations and snares; he must shun these paths, as those that lead to danger and death; and whatever he finds to have a contrary tendency, these are the things that he must do, these are the things that he must study, contrive, and follow. How happy would a man be, how perfect would he soon grow, if he did conduct himself by this rule? How little need would he have of outward comforts; how little value would he have for power and honour, for the state and pride of life? How little would he hunt after the pleasures of sense? What peace should he maintain within, when he should do nothing that were repugnant to the reason of his mind? What joy and hope would he abound with, when he should have so many daily proofs of his integrity, as the living above the body would give him? And how would all this strengthen and exalt the mind; what flights would it take towards heaven, and how invincible would it prove to all temptations?

tions? Happy and perfect that man, who has the kingdom of God thus within him, whose life is hid with Christ in God! when Christ, who is his life shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory. This is a comprehensive rule, and if well pursued, sufficient of its self to do the work I am here aiming at: but that it may be more easily reduced to practice, I think it not amiss to take a more particular view of it: and then it may be resolved into these two:

1. We must lay due restraints upon the body.

2. We must invigorate and fortify the mind, partly by the light of the gospel, and the grace of the Holy Spirit; and partly by accustoming it to retire and withdraw itself from the body.

§. 1. As to the restraints we are to lay upon the body, what they are, we easily learn from the scriptures: for first these expressly forbid us to gratify the lusts and affections of the flesh; and that not only because they are injurious to our neighbour, and a dishonour to our holy profession, but also because they have an ill influence upon the strength and liberty, the power and authority of the mind. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,*

grims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. And whoever enters into the account of things, will eaſily diſcern this to be true; there is a deceitfulneſs in ſin, a ſenſuality in luſt: who ſees not that there is more attraction in the pride and oſtentation of life, than in the ſimplicity and plainneſs of it? That there is more temptation and allurement in riot and luxury, than in frugality and a competency? That the imagination of a *Solomon* himſelf cannot but be wretchedly abuſed, if he give it leave to wander and wanton in variety? In a word, if the mind follow a carnal or worldly appetite and fancy in all its exceſſes and debauches, it will ſoon find it ſelf miſerably inſlaved and intoxicated; it will be wholly in the intereſt of the body, and wholly given up to the pleaſures of it. Secondly, Tho' the ſcripture do not prohibit ſome *ſtates* or *conditions* of this life, which ſeems as it were more nearly *allied* to, or at leaſt-wiſe at leſs diſtance from the *luſts of the fleſh*, than others are; yet it forbids us to *covet* and *purſue* them. Thus St. *Paul*, Rom. xii. 16. *Mind not high things.* The apoſtle does not here oblige any man to degrade himſelf beneath his birth, or to fly from thoſe advantages which God's providence and his own merits give him a juſt title to; but certainly

certainly he does oblige the Chriſtian not to aſpire ambitiouſly to great things, nor fondly to pride himſelf in ſucceſſes of this kind. So when a little after he commands us *in honour to prefer one another*, certainly he does not teach how to talk, but how to act; not how to court and compliment, but to deport our ſelves conſonant to thoſe notions with which charity towards our neighbour, and humility towards our ſelves ought to inſpire us. Thus again, we are not forbidden to be rich; no man is bound to ſtrip himſelf of thoſe poſſeſſions which he is born to, or to ſhut out that increaſe which God's bleſſing and his own diligence naturally bring in: but we are forbid to *thirſt after riches*, or to *value* our ſelves upon them, and commanded to be content with thoſe things that we have; and if God bleſs us with wealth, to enjoy it with modeſty and thankfulneſs, and diſpenſe it with liberality, 1 *Tim.* vi. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *Godlineſs with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while ſome coveted after, they have erred*

red from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows. ver. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate: laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* And to multiply no more inſtances of reſtraints of this or the like nature, thus we ought to ſtand affected towards *praiſe* and *reputation*, *intereſt* and *power*, *beauty*, *ſtrength*, &c. We muſt neither be too intent upon them, nor enjoy them with too much guſt and ſatisfaction; for this is that diſpoſition which appears to me to ſuit beſt with the ſpirit and deſign of the goſpel, and with the nature of ſuch things as being of a middle ſort, are equally capable of being either temptations or bleſſings, inſtruments of good or evil.

3*dly*, The ſcripture regulates and bounds our *natural* and *neceſſary* appetites, not ſo much by *nicely* defining the *exact* degrees and meaſures within which nature muſt be ſtrictly contained, as by exalted *examples* of, and *exhortations* to a *ſpiritual*, *pure*, and *heavenly* diſpoſition. Thus our Lord and Maſter ſeems to me to give ſome check

check to the ſtream of natural affection, and to call off his diſciples from it, to the conſideration of a ſpiritual relation; *Mark* iii. 34, 35. *And he looked round about on them which ſat about him, and ſaid, behold my mother and my brethren: for whoſoever ſhall do the will of God, the ſame is my brother, and my ſiſter, and mother.* To which words of our Lord I may join thoſe of St. *Paul*, *Henceforth know we no man after the fleſh--- yet now henceforth know we him no more*, 2 *Cor.* v. 16. The anſwer of our Lord to a diſciple who would have deferred his following him, till he had buried his father, *Matth.* viii. 21. and to him who begged leave to go and bid farewel firſt to his relations and domeſticks, *Luke* ix. 61. does plainly countenance the doctrine I here advance; and ſo does St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. vii. 29. ſo often cited by me. Not that our Saviour or his apoſtles did ever account our natural affections *vicious* and *impure*; for 'tis a vice to be without them, *Rom.* i. 31. Not that they went about to diminiſh or abate, much leſs to cancel the *duties* flowing from them: no; they only prune the *luxuriancy* of *untaught* nature, and correct the *fondneſſes* and *infirmities* of *animal* inclinations. Our natural affections may entangle and enſlave us, as well as unlawful and irregular ones, if we lay no reſtraint upon them. Religion indeed makes them

the ſeeds of virtue, but without it they eaſily betray us into ſin and folly. For this reaſon I doubt not, leſt under pretence of ſatisfying our moſt natural and importunate appetites, we ſhould be enſnared into the love of this world, and entangled in the cares of it, our Saviour forbids us to take thought for to-morrow, even for the *neceſſaries* of to-morrow, *what we ſhall eat, and what we ſhall drink, and wherewithal we ſhall be cloathed*, Matth. vi. Theſe are the reſtraints laid upon the body in ſcripture; which if any man obſerve, he will ſoon diſcern himſelf as far purified and freed from original corruption, as human nature in this life is capable of. And that he may;

§. 2*dly*, He muſt fortify and invigorate the mind. And this muſt be done two ways. Firſt, By poſſeſſing it with the knowledge of the goſpel, and the grace of the Spirit. Secondly, By withdrawing it often from the body. As to the former branch of this rule, the neceſſity of it is apparent: ſince the ſtate of nature is ſuch as has before been deſcribed, we ſtand in need not only of *revelation* to *enlighten* us, but alſo of *grace* to *ſtrengthen* us; of the former to excite us to exert all the force and power we have; of the latter to enable us to do that which our natural force never can effect. It cannot be here expected that

I ſhould

I ſhould treat of the operation of the Spirit, and the ways of obtaining it, grieving, and quenching it; this would demand a peculiar treatiſe. I will here only obſerve, that it is the work of the Spirit to *repair*, in ſome degree at leaſt, the *ruins* of the *fall*; to *rectify nature*; to *improve* our *faculties*, and to *imprint* in us the *divine Image*: that meditation and prayer, and a careful conformity to the divine will, obtain and increaſe the grace of the Spirit: that negligence and preſumptuous wickedneſs grieve and extinguiſh it. As to the knowledge of the goſpel, I ſhall not need to ſay much here, I have conſidered this matter in the chapter of *Illumination*, and will only obſerve, that the doctrines of the goſpel are ſuch, as, if they be thoroughly imbibed, do effectually raiſe us above a ſtate of *nature*, and ſet us free from the *power* and *prevalence* of our original corruption. Were we but once perſuaded, that we are ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth: that all carnal gratifications do war againſt the ſoul: that our ſouls are properly our ſelves, and that our firſt cares are to be for them: that God is himſelf our ſoveraign good, and the fountain of all inferior good: that our perfection and happineſs conſiſt in the love and ſervice of him: that we have a mighty Mediator, who once died for us, and ever lives to make interceſſion for us: that *a*

kingdom incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is *reſerved in heaven* for all meek, faithful, and holy ſouls: were we, I ſay, but once thoroughly perſuaded of theſe truths, with what vigour would they impregnate our minds? How clear would be the convictions of conſcience? How uncontroulable the authority of reaſon? How ſtrong the inſtincts and propenſions of the mind towards righteouſneſs and virtue? Theſe would alienate the mind from the world and the body, and turn the bent of it another way; theſe would inſpire it with other deſires and hopes, and make it form different projects from what it had before; *old things are done away, and all things are become new.* The ſecond branch of this ſecond particular rule is, that we muſt accuſtom our ſelves to retire frequently from the commerce and converſation of the body. Whether the eating the forbidden fruit did open to the mind new ſcenes of ſenſuality which it thought not of, and ſo called it down from the ſerenity and heights of a more pure and contemplative life, to participate the turbulent pleaſures of ſenſe, immerſing it as it were by this means deeper into the body, I pretend not to judge. But 'tis certain a too intimate conjunction of the mind with the body, and the ſatisfactions of it, does very much debaſe it. 'Tis our great unhappineſs,

happineſs, that the ſoul is always in the ſenſes, and the ſenſes are always upon the world; we converſe with the world, we talk of the world, we think of the world, we project for the world; and what can this produce, but a carnal and worldly frame of ſpirit? We muſt meditate heavenly things; we muſt have our converſation in heaven; we muſt accuſtom our ſelves to inward and heavenly pleaſures, if we will have heavenly minds: we muſt let no day paſs, wherein we muſt not withdraw our ſelves from the body, and ſequeſter our ſelves from the world, that we may converſe with God and our own ſouls. This will ſoon enable us to diſdain the low and beggarly ſatisfactions of the outward man, and make us long to be ſet free from the weight of this corruptible body, to breathe in purer air, and take our fill of refined and ſpiritual pleaſure. I have inſiſted thus long on the cure of original ſin, not only becauſe it is the *root* of all our *miſery*, but alſo becauſe there is ſuch an *affinity* between this and the ſin of infirmity, which I am next to ſpeak to, that the ſame remedies may be preſcribed to both; ſo that I am already eaſed of a part of the labour, which I muſt otherwiſe have undergone in the following chapter.

I am now by the laws of my own method obliged to conſider the *effects* of this

branch of *Chriſtian Liberty* in the *perfect* man, and to ſhew what influence it has upon his happineſs. But having, *ſect.* 1. *ch.* 4. diſcourſed at large of the ſubſerviency of Perfection to our happineſs; and in *ſect.* 2. *chap.* 3. of the happy effects of Chriſtian liberty in general, I have the leſs need to ſay much here on this head: yet I cannot wholly forbear ſaying ſomething of it. The conqueſt over original corruption, ſuch as I have deſcribed it, raiſes man to the higheſt pitch of Perfection that our nature is capable of; makes him approach the neareſt, that mortality can, to the life of angels, and plants him on the mount of God, where grace, and joy, and glory, ſhine always on him with more direct and ſtrong rays. Now is virtue *truly lovely*, and *truly happy*; now the aſſurance of the mind is never interrupted, its joy never overcaſt; it enjoys a perpetual calm within, and ſparkles with a peculiar luſtre that cannot be counterfeited, cannot be equalled. Some faint and partial reſemblance, I confeſs, of this virtue, or rather of this ſtate or conſummation of it, have I, tho' very rarely, ſeen in ſome maſterly ſtrokes of nature. I have obſerved in ſome, that ſweetneſs of temper; in others, that coldneſs and abſolute command over themſelves, with reſpect to the pleaſures; and in ſeveral, that innate modeſty and humility, that natural

tural indifference for the power, honour, and grandeur of life, that I could ſcarce forbear pronouncing, that they had ſo far each of them eſcaped the *contagion* of original corruption, and could not but bleſs and love them. But, after all, there is a vaſt difference between theſe *creatures* of *nature*, and thoſe of *grace*: the Perfection of the one is confined to this or that particular diſpoſition; but that of the other is in its degree univerſal: the Perfection of the one has indeed as much charm in it as pure nature can have; but the other has a mixture of ſomething divine in it; it has an heavenly tincture, which adds ſomething of *ſacredneſs* and *majeſty* to it, that nature wants: the Perfection of the one is indeed eaſy to its ſelf, and amiable to others; but the Perfection of the other is joy and glory within, and commands a veneration as well as love from all it converſes with. Bleſſed ſtate! when ſhall I attain thy lovely innocence! when ſhall I enter into thy divine reſt! when ſhall I arrive at thy ſecurity, thy pleaſure!

CHAP. V.

Of liberty, *with reſpect to ſins of* infirmity. *An enquiry into theſe three things,* 1. *Whether there be any ſuch ſins,* viz. *Sins in which the moſt perfect live and die.* 2. *If there are, what they be; or what diſtinguiſhes them from damnable or mortal ſins.* 3. *How far we are to extend the liberty of the perfect man in relation to* theſe *ſins.*

THIS is a *ſubject*, wherein the very *being* of holineſs or virtue, the *ſalvation* of man, and the *honour* of God, are deeply intereſted: for if we allow of ſuch ſins for *venial*, as really are not ſo, we deſtroy the notion, or evacuate the neceſſity of holineſs; endanger the ſalvation of man, and bring a reflection upon God as a favourer of impiety. On the other hand, if we aſſert thoſe ſins *damnable*, which are not really ſo, we miſerably perplex and diſturb the *minds* of men, and are highly injurious to the *goodneſs* of God; repreſenting him as a ſevere and intolerable maſter. But how important ſoever this ſubject be, there is no other, I think, in the compaſs of divinity, wherein ſo many writers have been ſo unfortunately engaged; ſo that it is over-grown with diſpute and controverſy, with confuſion and obſcurity, and numberleſs abſurdities and contradictions,

ons. This I have thought neceſſary to obſerve in the entrance of my diſcourſe, not to inſult the performances of others, or to raiſe in the reader any great expectation for my own; but indeed for a quite contrary reaſon, namely, to diſpoſe him to a favourable reception of what I here offer towards the rendring the doctrine of ſins of infirmity intelligible, and preventing the diſſervice which miſtakes about it do to religion.

By ſins of infirmity, both *ancients* and *moderns*, *papiſts* and *proteſtants*, do, I think, underſtand ſuch ſins as are conſiſtent with a ſtate of grace and favour; and from which the beſt men are never intirely freed in this life, though they be not imputed to them. This then being taken for granted, I ſhall enquire into theſe three things.

1. Whether there be any ſuch ſins, ſins in which the moſt perfect live and dye.

2. If there are, what theſe be. What it is that diſtinguiſhes them from *damnable* or *mortal* ones.

3. How far we are the extend the *liberty* of the perfect man in relation to *theſe*.

1. Whether there be any ſuch. That the beſt men are not without errors, without defects and failings, and that not only in their paſt life, or unregenerate ſtate, but

but their beſt, and moſt perfect one, is a truth which cannot, one would think, be controverted: for what *underſtanding* is there, which is not liable to *error*? What *will*, that does not feel ſomething of *impotence*, ſomething of *irregularity*? What *affections*, that are merely human, are ever *conſtant*, ever *raiſed*? Where is the *faith*, that has no *ſcruple*, no *diffidence*; the *love*, that has no *defect*, no *remiſſion*; the *hope*, that has no *fear* in it? What is the *ſtate*, which is not liable to *ignorance*, *inadvertency*, *ſurpriſe*, *infirmity*? Where is the *obedience*, that has no *reluctancy*, no *remiſneſs*, no *deviation*? This is a truth, which, whether men will or no, they cannot chuſe but feel; the confeſſions of the holieſt of men bear witneſs to it. And the pretenſion of the *Quakers*, to a ſinleſs and perfect ſtate, is abundantly confuted by that anſwer one of the moſt eminent of them makes to an objection, which charges them with arrogating and aſſuming to themſelves infallibility and perfection, *viz.* *That they were ſo far infallible and perfect, as they were led by the Spirit of God.* For what is this, but to *deſert* and *betray*, not defend their cauſe? 'Tis plain then, as to matter of fact, that the moſt *perfect* upon earth are not without frailties and infirmities; and ſuch infirmities, as diſcover themſelves in actual ſlips and errors.

errors. But the queſtion is, whether theſe are to be accounted *ſins?* I muſt confeſs, if we ſtrictly follow the language of the ſcripture, we ſhould rather call them by ſome other name; for this does ſo generally underſtand by ſin, a deliberate tranſgreſſion of the law of God, that it will be very difficult to produce *many* texts wherein the word *ſin* is uſed in any other ſenſe. As to *legal* pollutions, I have not much conſidered the matter. But as to *moral* ones, I am in ſome degree confident, that the word ſin does generally ſignify ſuch a tranſgreſſion as by the goſple covenant is puniſhable with death and *rarely* does it occur in any other ſenſe: I ſay *rarely*; for, if I be not much miſtaken, the ſcripture does *ſometimes* call thoſe infirmities, I am now talking of, ſins. But what if it did not? 'Tis plain, that every deviation from the law of God, if it has any concurrence of the will in it, is in ſtrict ſpeaking *ſin:* and 'tis as plain that the ſcripture does frequently give us ſuch deſcriptions and characters, and ſuch names of theſe ſins of infirmity, as do oblige us both to ſtrive and watch againſt them, and repent of them. For it calls them ſpots, errors, defects, ſlips, and the like. But, what is, laſtly, moſt to my purpoſe, it is plain, that this diſtinction of ſins, into mortal and venial, or

ſins

ſins of infirmity, has its foundation in expreſs texts of ſcripture. Numerous are the texts cited to this purpoſe: but he that will deal fairly muſt confeſs, that they are moſt of them improperly and impertinently urged, as relating either to falls into temporal calamity; or to mortal, not venial ſins; or to the ſins of an unregenerate ſtate; or to a comparative impurity, I mean the impurity of man with reſpect to God; a form of expreſſion frequent in *Job*. I will therefore content myſelf to cite three or four, which ſeem not liable to theſe exceptions, *Deut.* xxxii. 4. *They have corrupted themſelves; their ſpot is not the ſpot of his children: they are a perverſe and crooked generation.* Here two things ſeem to be pointed out to us plainly: *Firſt*, that the children of God are not without their ſpots. *Secondly*, That theſe are not of the ſame nature with thoſe of the wicked, in compariſon with thoſe wilful and perverſe tranſgreſſions, the children of God are, elſewhere, pronounced blameleſs, without offence, without ſpot, *Pſalm* xix. 12, 13. *Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults: keep back alſo thy ſervant from preſumptuous ſins, let them not have dominion over me; then ſhall I be upright, and I ſhall be innocent from the great tranſgreſſion.* Here again the *Pſalmiſt* ſeems to me to place upright-

uprightneſs in freedom from deliberate or mortal ſin, and to admit of another ſort of tranſgreſſions, in which even upright men ſlip ſometimes. Nor does the *Pſalmiſt* here only aſſert venial ſins; but he ſeems to me to ſuggeſt the ſprings and ſources of them, namely, ſome ſecret diſpoſitions in our nature to folly and error, which he prays God to cleanſe and free him from more and more; *Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults.* The word *fault* is not in the original; but ſomething of that kind muſt be ſupplied to render the ſenſe intire in our language. The words of *Solomon*, *Prov.* xx. 9. ſeem to relate to this corruption lurking in us, and never utterly to be extirpated; *Who can ſay I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?* For if this ſhould be applied to mortal ſin, every one ſees, that it will contradict a hundred places in ſcripture, which attribute to righteous men, purity of heart, and deliverance from ſin. Laſtly, *James* iii. 2. we are told plainly, that *in many things we offend all*, πολλὰ πάντες, not ſinners only, but righteous and upright men, have their defects and ſlips. And accordingly there is not any life which we have the hiſtory of in ſcripture, how excellent ſoever the perſon be, but we meet with ſome of theſe recorded; as will appear from thoſe ſeveral inſtances

ces I ſhall produce, when I come to deſcribe the nature of theſe ſins. And certainly, when *David* ſays of himſelf, *My ſins are more in number than the hairs of my head:* he that ſhall interpret this place of mortal or preſumptuous ſins, will both contradict the ſcriptures, which acquit him, except in the matter of *Uriah*, and highly wrong the memory of *David*, making him a prodigy of wickedneſs, inſtead of a ſaint. Nor does *that* make any thing againſt me, which he adds in the next words, *My heart fails me*; or *that* in the foregoing verſe, *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that I am not able to look up.* For I do not affirm that the *Pſalmiſt* here has regard only to ſins of infirmity excluſively of others: no; he reckons all together, and ſo diſcerns the one aggravated by the other; and the guilt of all together very far enhanced. Nor do I, *ſecondly*, intereſt myſelf here in that diſpute between proteſtants and papiſts, whether ſins of Infirmity are not damnable in their own nature, though not imputed under the covenant of grace? Nor do I, laſtly, examine what a vaſt heap of ſins of Infirmity may amount to, though the guilt of this or that alone were not ſo fatal. I have then, I think, proved the matter in queſtion; having ſhewed, both from the experience of mankind and the ſcrip-

ſcripture, that the beſt men have their infirmities and defects; and that theſe may properly enough be called ſins. I think it ſuperfluous to prove, that they conſiſt with a ſtate of ſalvation; ſince 'tis not by any, that I know of, denied; and may be eaſily enough made out, from what I have already ſaid. I am now to enquire,

§. 2. What theſe ſins be; and how diſtinguiſhed from mortal or damnable ones. To this purpoſe we may diſtinguiſh human actions (under which I compriſe both internal and external) into three ſorts; voluntary, involuntary, and mixt.

§. 1. There are actions properly and truly voluntary; ſuch are thoſe deliberate tranſgreſſions of a divine law, which man commits in oppoſition to the direct remonſtrances of conſcience; he knows the action is forbid; he ſees the turpitude and obliquity of it; he is not ignorant of the puniſhment denounced againſt it, and yet he ventures upon it: this is plainly mortal, damnable ſin; and I cannot think, that any circumſtance or pretence whatever can render it venial. And therefore I muſt be pardoned, if I cannot be of their opinion, who ſuppoſe, that the ſmallneſs of the matter, the reluctancy of conſcience, or the length and force of a temptation, can ſo ſoften and miti-

gate

gate a voluntary tranſgreſſion, as to *di-* miniſh it into a ſin of Infirmity. 1. As to the ſmallneſs of the matter. Some cannot but think thoſe tranſgreſſions venial, which are, for the matter of them, ſo ſlight and inſignificant, that they ſeem to be attended by no miſchievous conſequence, nor to offer any diſhonour to God, nor injuſtice to man. But I doubt this notion of venial ſin has no ſolidity in it; for either men perform ſuch actions deliberately, or indeliberately; knowing them to be ſinful, or believing them to be innocent. Now, if we perform any action deliberately, and knowing it to be ſinful, we never ought to look upon this as a *little* ſin, much leſs a *venial* one. The reaſon of this is plain. The firſt notion that every man has of ſin, is, that it is forbidden by, and diſpleaſing to God; and then to do that deliberately, which we know will provoke God, is an argument of a fearleſs and irreligious heart, a heart deſtitute of the love of God, the love of righteouſneſs, and heaven. But if a man tranſgreſs in a *trifling inſtance indeliberately*; this alters the caſe; for the matter not being of importance enough to excite the intention and application of the mind; and there being conſequently no malignity of the will in an action, where there was no concurrence of the judgment, I cannot

cannot but think, this may very well pass for an human infirmity; for all the fault that can be here laid to the charge of man is, incogitancy or inadvertency; and that too as excusable a one as can be. Lastly, where the matter of an action is very trifling and inconsiderable, and draws after it no ill consequence, either with respect to God or man; in this case, if a man judge it no sin, I cannot think it is any to him; though by a nice and scrupulous construction, it may fall within the compass of some divine prohibition. The distinction of the schoolmen is good enough here; it is besides the law, but not against it: or it is against the letter, but not the design and intention of the law of God. I cannot think that it is consistent with the infinite goodness of God, to punish such things as these with eternal misery, or that it can become a man of sense seriously to afflict his soul for them. I cannot for my life perswade my self, that I should provoke God, if passing through a field of my neighbour's corn or pease, I should pull off an ear or cod; or passing through his orchard, should eat an apple. The notion I have of God, and the great end and design of his laws, will not suffer me to entertain such trifling, weak, and superstitious fancies. And here I cannot but take

notice of two things, which very much perplex the minds of ſome good people; that is, an idle *word*, and *jeſting*: concerning both which, 'tis very plain, that ſuch are miſerably miſtaken; and that they are no ſins at all, unleſs unreaſonable and ſuperſtitious ſcruples make them ſo: this, I ſay, on ſuppoſition that by idle word, they mean *only* ſuch talk, as does not tend to edification; and by jeſting, only *that* which is innocent and divertive. By an idle word (*Mat.* xii.) our Saviour plainly means a blaſphemous word, if that ſaying of our Saviour, of every *idle word*, &c. be to be limited and confined by the ſenſe of the context: for the occaſion of the aſſertion of our Lord, was the blaſphemy which the *Jews* belched out againſt his miracles. Or if our Lord here, on this occaſion, advances a general doctrine, then, by an idle word, we muſt underſtand a wicked one, proceeding from a corrupt and naughty heart; and tending as directly to promote impiety, as gracious and wholſome diſcourſe does to promote edification. This is evident from *ver.* 25. *A good man, out of the good treaſure of the heart, bringeth forth good things*; and an *evil man, out of the evil treaſure, bringeth forth evil things.* And *ver.* 37. *for by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

demned. By *jesting*, *Eph.* v. 4. the apostle understands the *modish raillery* of the *Greeks*, which was generally made up of *prophaneness* and *wantonness*; or brisk and sharp ironies. This is plain, both from the company we find it in αἰσχρότης καὶ μωρολογία, filthiness and fooliſh speaking; and from the character given it in common with the other two, Τὰ μὴ ἀνήκοντα, being the very same that is given the most infamous and vilest lusts and passions. *Rom.* i. 28. *Things not convenient* is a diminutive expression, implying such things as contain much turpitude and wickedness in them. *Beza*, as appears by his notes, reads ἢ, not ἐν, in this place, fooliſh speaking, *or*, not *and*, jesting; which (as he observes) makes jesting the same thing with fooliſh speaking, or buffoonry. And justifies that jesting, which consists in a pleasant and divertive facetiousness from 1 *Kings* xviii. 27. 2 *Kings* iii. 23. *Isa.* xiv. 11.

2. Some think, that the mere reluctancy and opposition of conscience against sin, is sufficient to constitute a sin of Infirmity. And this has received no small countenance from such an interpretation of *Rom.* vii, as makes holiness to be nothing else but a vicissitude of desires and actions, repugnant to one another. But at this rate no man's sins would be damning

but his whoſe conſcience were ſeared; and when one's heart did condemn one, God would be ſure to acquit one: which agrees very ill with St. *John*, *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 *Joh.* iii. 21. No man, unleſs arrived at a reprobate ſenſe, can do that which is evil, without reluctancy; for his conſcience will forbid him, as long as it has the leaſt degree of tenderneſs in it; and reſtrain him as far as it has power. And as to *Rom.* vii. it has been abundantly conſidered; and, I think, ſufficiently proved to belong to thoſe, who are the ſervants of ſin; as *Rom.* viii. does to thoſe who are ſet free. St. *Auſtin* indeed tells us, that he underſtood that chapter at firſt as the *Pelagians* did, for a perſon under the law, and under the power of ſin; but that he found himſelf conſtrained afterwards to underſtand it of St. *Paul* himſelf. I will not examine the ſolidity of his reaſons: 'tis enough to me, that his change of opinion does religion no harm: for he is ſo far from making a ſtate of holineſs to conſiſt with acts of deliberate ſin againſt conſcience, that he will not excuſe ſo much as rebellious motions and appetites, if conſented to. All that he contends for, in a good man, from this chapter is, that lapſed nature will ſometimes exert itſelf, even in the beſt

men,

men, in diſorderly and diſtempered appetites.

3. Others, laſtly, will have thoſe ſins, into which we fall, either overpowered by the ſtrength, or wearied out by the aſſiduity or length of a temptation, paſs for Infirmities. But this opinion has as little ground as the two former. I can find no ſcripture that countenances this notion. There are indeed ſome of great reputation, who have promoted it. But, I think, the words of St. *Paul* make againſt it, 1 *Cor.* x. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but ſuch as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape; that ye may be able to bear it.* The deſign of which words is certainly to encourage Chriſtians againſt the biggeſt temptations, by an aſſurance of relief from God, proportionable to our neceſſities; and conſequently muſt imply, that if we yield to a temptation, 'tis our own fault. God expects we ſhould ſtand firm under the higheſt trials. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,* Rev. ii. 10. *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me in my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his throne,* Rev. iii. 21. *But whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny*

before my Father which is in heaven, Mat. x. 33. If therefore, by ſins of Infirmity, men mean, ſuch as are conſiſtent with the ſtate of grace, *i. e.* ſuch as good men may frequently fall into, without forfeiting the peace of conſcience, and the favour of God, I cannot poſſibly think, that any deliberate ſin can be ſuch, upon the ſcore of the temptation; or that any of thoſe ſins, reckoned in the catalogue, *Gal.* v. and *Eph.* v. can be ſuch on the account of the violence or perſeverance with which they attack us. But, ſecondly, if by ſins of Infirmity, they mean ſuch ſins as righteous men are liable to; I know not what they are from which they are exempted. But if, laſtly, by ſins of Infirmity, they mean ſuch, for which God is more eaſily intreated; then there is no queſtion to be made, but that there is a difference in ſins; which is to be eſtimated by the different meaſures of grace and knowledge; by the different degrees of deliberation and ſurprize; and by the force or weakneſs, the continuance or ſhortneſs, of a temptation: and, finally, by the different effects and tendencies of ſins. To all which, I do not queſtion, but that the ſpirit has regard in thoſe directions, which it gives us, for our behaviour towards ſuch as fall, *Gal.* vi. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiri-*

ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs; conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted. And of ſome have compaſſion, making a difference: and others ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire, Jude 22, 23.

§. 2. A Second ſort of actions are ſuch as we call involuntary; that is, thoſe wherein we exerciſe no deliberation, no choice. Some have reduced ſins of infirmity to this head, but with what colour of reaſon any one may judge. For ſince action truly *involuntary*, are neither the objects of the underſtanding nor will, 'tis hard to conceive what morality there can be in them. The grounds on which this opinion is built are ſuch as theſe. Firſt, the meaſure, ſay they, of good and evil is the law of God; but involuntary and unavoidable actions are not a proper ſubject of laws: for to what purpoſe is it to preſcribe rules, or to propoſe rewards and puniſhments to ſuch actions, as are no way ſubject to our choice? Secondly, They tell us, 'tis inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of God, and the riches of goſpel grace, to impute thoſe things to a man as damnable ſins, which fall not within the compaſs of his power or deliberation. Now, I muſt confeſs, I am ſo far from denying any actions, that can lay a juſt claim to this apology, to be venial,

that I cannot forbear thinking that they are not ſinful: for *where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion.* But how does this way of arguing for the excuſableneſs of involuntary tranſgreſſions, conſiſt with thoſe other doctrines which they maintain concerning them; namely, that we are bound to repentance for them; that theſe ſins are not venial in their own nature, but only thro' the favour of God? For the law, taken in its rigour, denounces death againſt all ſin in general, without limitation or exception; ſo that if God ſhould judge rigorouſly, even involuntary ſin would fall under that ſentence, *The wages of ſin is death.* This, I muſt confeſs, ſeems to me very incoherent. For if an action be of that nature, that it cannot properly be the matter or ſubject of a law, how can it fall under the condemnation of law? If it be of that nature that it is incapable of any moral regulation, nor ſubject to the influence of reward or puniſhment, how can it be mere matter of grace that a man is not damned for it? In a word, if an action be truly and properly involuntary, it can by no means be ſin; and if it be voluntary, it is ſubject to the regulation of laws: 'tis a proper inſtance of deliberation and freedom, and capable of rewards and puniſhments. And the truth is, the one needs

no

no apology, and the other is not capable of any; the one is a mortal ſin, and the other no ſin at all. And therefore, we muſt look for venial ſin in ſome other ſpecies of action.

§. 3. The laſt claſs of actions are thoſe which are of a mixt nature; partly voluntary, and partly involuntary: and here, I think, we muſt place ſins of infirmity, by whatever names we may call them. For theſe ſurely, if they are to be ranked (as by all they are) amongſt actual ſins, muſt be ſuch actions as have in them, ſomething of voluntary, ſomething of involuntary, much of human frailty, and ſomething of ſinful; much of unavoidable, and ſomething of moral obliquity. Theſe are the trangreſſions which the ſcripture ſeems to me, to intend by errors, defects, ſlips, motes, the ſpots of God's children; and theſe certainly, if any, muſt be the ſins that conſiſt with a ſtate of grace. For theſe do not imply a deliberate wickedneſs in the will, much leſs an habitual one; nay, they do not include in them any *wickedneſs* at all, ſtrictly ſpeaking, but are truly the effects of human frailty, and the unhappy circumſtances of this mortal life. Thus then I deſcribe a venial ſin; it has in it ſo much of voluntary as to make it ſin, ſo much of involuntary as to make it frailty;

ty; it has ſo much of the will in it, that it is capable of being reduced; and yet ſo much of neceſſity in it, it is never utterly to be extirpated: it has ſomething in it criminal enough to oblige us to watch againſt it, and repent of it; and yet ſo much in it pitiable and excuſable, as to intitle us to pardon under the covenant of grace. And thus I diſtinguiſh venial from mortal ſin: mortal ſin proceeds from a heart, either habitually corrupted, or deceived and captivated for the time; but venial ſin reſults from the imperfections and infelicities of our nature, and our ſtate. Mortal ſin is truly voluntary and deliberate in the riſe and birth of it, and miſchievous and injurious in its conſequence: but venial ſin is very far indeliberate in its beginning, and, if not indulged, almoſt harmleſs in its effects: deficiency is, as it were, the eſſence of the one, malignity of the other; in the one we ſee more of frailty, in the other more of wickedneſs: in the one ſomething nearly allied to neceſſity, in the other to preſumption: the one is the tranſgreſſion of the law of Perfection, the other of the law of Sincerity; the one is repugnant to the letter, the other to the deſign and end of the law; the one is a violation of God's commands, taken in the moſt favourable conſtruction, the other a violation of them in a rigorous one.

one. That this was the notion of St. *Auſtin*, St. *Jerome*, and others, who impugned the ſinleſs Perfection of the *Pelagians*, is very plain. 1. From the diſtinction they made between Κακία and ἁμάρτημα, *Crimen* and *Peccatum*, i. e. between wickedneſs and defects, between crimes and faults; for this is plainly the ſenſe wherein they uſed theſe words. And next from thoſe very clear and lively deſcriptions of venial ſin, which occur frequently in St. *Auſtin*; after whom, 'tis well known, others writ. Such is that * *through ignorance or infirmity, for want of exerting out utmoſt ſtrength againſt concupiſcence, we are drawn away by it to ſome unlawful things; and the worſe we are, ſo much the more and the oftener; but the better we are, ſo much the leſs and the ſeldomer do we give way to it.* And thus † St. *Jerome* imputes venial ſin, to our not making uſe of our utmoſt ſtrength and diligence. I might content my ſelf with having given this general deſcription of ſins of infirmity, did I not know, how ill a talent ſome have at applications of generals to any particular caſe; and how little ſatisfactory ſuch account

* —— *Fit per Ignorantiam vel Infirmitatem non exertis adverſus eam totis viribus voluntatis, eidem ad illicita etiam nonnulla cedamus, tanto magis & crebrius quanto deteriores, tanto minus & rarius quanto meliores ſumus.* Tom. 7. *De* Peccat. Rem. p. 689.

† *Hoc & nos dicimus, poſſe Hominem non peccare, ſi velit, pro tempore, pro loco, pro imbecillitate corporea, quamdiu intentus eſt Animus, quamdiu chorda nullo vitio laxatur in* Cithara. *Dial.* 3. *adv. Pelag.* p. 201.

count is to the weak and ſcrupulous. For the ſake of theſe therefore, I think fit to be a little more diſtinct and particular on this argument. In venial ſins then, two things muſt be conſidered.

1. The matter of it.
2. The manner of committing it.

1. As to the matter, I conceive it ought to be *ſlight* and *inconſiderable*. There is no room for a venial ſin in things of a crying provoking nature; as in adultery, idolatry, murther; for in theſe, the injuſtice and wickedneſs, with reſpect to God and man, is palpable and formidable; and can never, for ought I ſee, be extenuated by any circumſtances into ſins of infirmity. But when I ſay, the matter of the ſin of infirmity muſt not be deteſtable and crying provocation, I do not mean to extend this to the firſt *tendencies* and *diſpoſitions* even towards ſuch ſins. Thus tho' adultery cannot be a venial ſin; yet the firſt ſallies of the deſire, the firſt glances and wandrings of the eye, may. And the ſame thing may be ſaid of the firſt motions towards any other ſin.

2. As to the next thing to be conſidered in a venial ſin, that is, the *manner* of committing it, it muſt proceed from *ignorance*, *frailty*, or *ſurpriſe*.

1. From

1. From *ignorance.* By ignorance I do not mean that which is utterly *invincible*, but that which has ſome *defect*, ſome *frailty*, ſome *degree* of *negligence* in it. Of this kind, I take thoſe errors to be, againſt which *David* prays, *Pſalm* xix. 12. *Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults.* He that conſiders human nature, and the power of education, the influences of prejudices which we ſuck in betimes, and ſuch like, will eaſily acknowledge, that there may be ſuch errors. When we have uſed a *moral diligence* in examining our lives, and trying our own hearts; yet conſidering the vaſt variety of duties we are to run through, no humble man can be confident, that he has omitted nothing, that he is miſtaken in nothing. This I take to be the ſenſe of *Solomon*, Prov. xx. 9. *Who can ſay, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?* And this I take to be the ſenſe of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. iv. 4. *For I know nothing by my ſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.* There are miſtakes and errors, which might indeed have been prevented or removed, by the *ſtricteſt* impartiality, and the *ſtricteſt* diligence. But alas! how often do good men fall ſhort of both theſe? How common is it for good men to be too far tranſported by the beſt of principles, even zeal? How often do good

good men mix their errors in reproof and reprehenſion, and in one and the other, they diſcern it not?

2. *Surpriſe* and *inadvertency* is another thing that renders ſin *venial*. The multitude of affairs and temptations, the ſuddenneſs and unexpectedneſs of ſome unuſual temptation, or ſomething of this kind, may betray a good man into ſome ſlips or errors, in word or deed. This I take to be the caſe of *Sarah*, when ſhe ſaid, *I laughed not*: of *Jonah*, when he replied upon God, *I do well to be angry*, *Jon.* iii. Of *David*, when he pronounced raſhly, *do thou and Ziba divide the land*, 2 *Sam.* xvi. 4. Of *Saul* and *Barnabas*, when they broke out into heat and anger. But that which was a ſin of *infirmity* in the beginning, became, I doubt, a *deliberate* one in the end, when they parted from one another. Some extend this circumſtance of ſurprize to excuſe ſins, which imply notorious wickedneſs, and are of very ill conſequence; but, I think, very erroneouſly. 'Tis true, theſe ſins of ſurprize, whatever the matter of them be, are generally conceived to be much extenuated through want of opportunity to ſummon our ſtrength, and to make uſe of mature and ſober deliberation; eſpecially where the temptation is not *only ſudden* but *violent* too. For in this caſe, the ſoldier

dier of Chriſt, taken, as it were, in an ambuſh, or blown up with a mine, ſeems to be loſt and defeated before he diſcerns his danger: I do not doubt then, but this ſuddenneſs of a temptation does very much diminiſh the guilt of a ſin. But we ought to remember too, that there are many things that do abate and take off from this excuſe: as firſt, it is not eaſy to conceive how any thing, that is a direct wickedneſs, that is a ſin of a deeper dye than ordinary, on the account of its miſchievous conſequences, ſhould make its approach ſo ſilently, and ſo ſuddenly, that we ſhould fall into it indiſcernibly. Secondly, The Chriſtian is bound to ſhun not only every evil, but every *appearance* of it; and 'tis hard to imagine, that a ſincere man, who does indeed ſtrain at a *gnat*, ſhould ſwallow a *camel*. He that preſerves the tenderneſs of conſcience, as he will have an *averſion* for *ſmall ſins*; ſo will he have an *horror* for *great ones*. Thirdly, The mind of a Chriſtian ought to be poſſeſſed and awed by the fear of God; and *that* not a ſlight and tranſient, but a deep and laſting one. The *Pſalmiſt* was not content to ſay, *I am afraid of thy judgments*; but, to expreſs how thoroughly this fear had ſeized him, he adds, *my fleſh trembleth for fear of thee*, Pſal. cxix. And certainly, this fear is a ſort of impenetrable

ble armour, which extinguiſhes all the fiery darts of the devil. In vain is the ſuddenneſs, or the briskneſs of a temptation, unleſs we firſt lay aſide this ſhield. Fourthly, We are bound to be always on our watch and guard; and therefore, if we relax our diſcipline, if we live ſecure and careleſs, if we raſhly caſt our ſelves upon dangers, our ſin then will be but the conſequence of our folly; and therefore one error cannot be an excuſe, or an apology, for another. I think therefore, the apology of ſurprize ſhould be confined and limited to *ſlight* offences; it cannot properly have room in *great* ones, or if it have, it may be urged in *mitigation* of our puniſhment; but never, I doubt, for *total impunity*.

3. Laſtly, Venial ſin has its riſe from the defects and imperfections of our *nature*, and the diſadvantagious circumſtances of our *ſtate*. Here come in the failures and defects in the *meaſures* and *degrees* of duty; if theſe can be properly reckoned for ſins: I ſay, if they can; for I do not ſee that this is a good argument: we are bound to the higheſt degree of love by that law. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*; therefore whatſoever falls ſhort of the higheſt and moſt abſolute degree of love, is a ſin: for at this rate, whatever were ſhort of

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Perfection, would be ſin. We muſt love, nothing better than God, nothing equal to him: this will conſtitute us in a ſtate of ſincerity. What is farther required is, that we are bound to *aim* at, and *purſue* after the higheſt and moſt perfect degrees of love; but we are not bound under pain of *damnation* to *attain* them. But on the other hand, I readily grant, that our falling ſhort in the degrees of faith, love, hope, and the like, may be properly reckoned amongſt ſins, when they ſpring from the defects of vigilance and induſtry: and if theſe defects be ſuch as can conſiſt with ſincerity, then are the imperfections or the abatements of our virtues, pardonable; and then only. Here again fall in *omiſſions*, *wandring thoughts*, *dulneſs* and *heavineſs* in duty, the ſhort *titillations* of ſome *irregular fancies*, *forgetfulneſs*, ſlight and ſhort *fits* of *envy*, *diſcontent*, *anger*, *ambition*, *gaiety* of mind. Thus we find the diſciples falling aſleep when they ſhould have prayed, *Mat.* xxvi. and *David* praying *quicken thou me*, Pſal. cxix. Thus his ſoul too was often caſt down, and diſquieted within him, *Pſal.* xlii. 2 *Chron.* xxx. 18, 19. *Job* curſed the day of his birth. In ſhort, our natures are *human*, not *angelical*; and our ſtate is ſo full of variety of accidents, that they are too apt to diſcompoſe the mind, and divert it from its great end. The ebbs and flows of blood and

ſpirits, and an unlucky conſtitution, or a diſtemper; the multitude or confuſion of affairs; the violence or the length of trials; the eaſe and flattery of proſperity; the wearineſs of the body, or of the mind; the incommodiouſneſs of fortune, roughneſs of converſation; theſe, and a thouſand other things, are apt to produce defects and failures in our obedience, ſhort diſorders in our affections; and ſuch emotions and eruptions as abundantly prove the beſt to be but men; and the higheſt Perfection, if it be but human, to be wanting and defective. I think I have now omitted nothing neceſſary to form a true notion of the ſin of infirmity. My next buſineſs therefore is, to conſider,

§. 3. How far the *liberty* of the perfect man, in reſpect of *venial ſin*, ought to be extended. There is great affinity between venial and original ſin; and therefore the perfect man's liberty, as it relates to the one and the other, conſiſts in much the ſame degrees, and is to be attained by the ſame method; ſo that I might well enough diſmiſs this ſubject, and paſs on to mortal ſin. But reflecting on the nature of man, how prone we are to ſin, and yet how apt we are to think well of our ſelves, I judge it neceſſary to guard the doctrine of venial ſin by ſome few rules, which may at once ſerve

ſerve to ſecure our ſincerity, and point out the Perfection we are to aſpire to. *1ſt*, then, If we would prevent any fatal event of ſins flowing from *ignorance*, we muſt take care, that our ignorance it ſelf be not *criminal*; and that it will not be, if our hearts be ſincerely diſpoſed to do our duty, and if we uſe moral diligence to know it: if we be impartial, humble, and honeſt, and have that concern for the knowledge and practice of our duty, that is in ſome ſort proportionable to the importance of it. The ignorance that ariſes from natural incapacity, or want of ſufficient revelation, is *invincible*; and therefore *innocent*, John ix. 41. *Jeſus ſasd unto them, if ye were blind, ye ſhould have no ſin; but now ye ſay, we ſee; therefore your ſin remaineth:* and xv. 22. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloak for their ſins.* This rule muſt be underſtood of *neceſſary* knowledge in general; and more *legible* and *conſpicuous* lines of duty: both which notwithſtanding, there may be room for ſins of infirmity to enter, where mortal ones cannot; there may be imperfect diſpoſitions of mind, and latent prejudices; there may be inſtances of duty of a ſlighter moment; there may be ſeveral circumſtances, and ſmall emergencies that may either be without the aim, or eſcape the diſcovery of a mo-

ral ſearch, that is, of a human one; which, tho' it be without *hypocriſy*, is not yet without more or leſs *frailty*. As to Perfection; it differs in this, as it does in other caſes, from ſincerity, only in the degrees by which it is advanced above it. He that will be perfect, muſt ſearch for wiſdom as for hid treaſures: his delight muſt be in the law of the Lord, and in his law muſt he meditate day and night: his thirſt of truth muſt be more eager and impatient, his diligence more wakeful, more circumſpect, more particular, more ſteady and conſtant, than that of the beginner; or of one who is no farther advanced, than ſuch meaſures of faith and love, as are indiſpenſably neceſſary to ſincerity, will carry him. 2*dly*, Sins that are occaſioned by *ſurprize* and *inadvertency*, will not prove deſtructive, if the *inadvertency* it ſelf be in a manner *innocent*: that is, firſt, there is no room for inadvertency in compleat acts of crying ſins. Secondly, there is no pretence for inadvertency, if we had any miſgivings within, or warnings without concerning that particular ſin, into which we fell afterwards; much leſs if we cheriſh ill motions till they grow too ſtrong for us. And laſt of all, if we repeat the ſame ſin frequently and contemptuouſly. And to this I may add; he cannot be ſaid to ſin through ſurprize, who throws himſelf

ſelf into the way of temptation, even tho' he be conſcious of his own infirmity. 3*dly*, As to thoſe moral defects which flow from *natural infirmity*; they will not deſtroy us, if the infirmity it ſelf be pardonable. There are infirmities, which we acquire; infirmities, which grow ſtronger by indulgence; infirmities, which continue merely becauſe we do not take pains to ſubdue them: our moral defects muſt not flow from theſe kinds of infirmities; but from ſuch as, conſidering human nature, and the ſtate of this world, 'tis impoſſible utterly to root out. Theſe moral defects will do us no harm; if, firſt, we take care to ſettle in our minds the habits of thoſe virtues that are directly oppoſite to them. Secondly, If we watch and fight againſt our natural infirmities; and endeavour to reduce our appetites, even our natural appetites, within ſtrict and narrow bounds. Thirdly, If we waſh off the ſtains of our ſlips and defects by a general repentance: for upon the notion I have here given of venial ſin, repentance appears to be very neceſſary: for I require in them ſomething of voluntary, ſomething of freedom; enough to make an action ſinful, tho' not to prove the heart corrupt or wicked. And becauſe the degrees of voluntary and involuntary are not ſo eaſily diſtinguiſhable from one another, 'tis plain

our beſt ſecurity againſt any ill conſequence of our defects and frailties, is a godly ſorrow. And therefore I wonder not if *David* charge himſelf more ſeverely than God does, *My ſins are more in number than the hairs of my head.* *This* was a confeſſion that became the humility and ſolicitude of a penitent; that became the reflections of a wiſe and perfect man, and the corruption of human nature; the alloy of human performances; the ſlips and defects, the interruptions, neglect, and deviations of the beſt life.

CHAP. VI.

Of liberty, *as it imports freedom or deliverance from* mortal ſin. *What mortal ſin is. How the perfect man muſt be free from it. And which way this* liberty *may be beſt attained; with ſome rules for the attainment of it.*

HERE I will inquire into three things;

1. What mortal ſin is; or what kind of ſins they be, which are on all hands acknowledged to be inconſiſtent with a ſtate of grace and favour.

2. How

2. How far the perfect man muſt be ſet free or delivered from this kind of ſins; or how remote he is from the guilt of them.

3. Which way this liberty may be beſt attained.

§. 1. The firſt thing neceſſary is, to ſtate the notion of that ſin, which paſſes under the name of *mortal, wilful, preſumptuous*, or *deliberate* ſin: for theſe in writers are equivalent terms, and promiſcuouſly uſed to ſignify one and the ſame thing. *Sin* (ſaith St. *John*, 1 *Ep.* iii. 4.) *is the tranſgreſſion of the law.* This is a plain and full definition too of ſin: for the law of God is the rule of moral actions; 'tis the ſtandard and meaſure of right and wrong, of moral good and evil. Whatever is not within the compaſs of the law, is not within the compaſs of morality neither: Whatever cannot be comprehended within this definition, cannot have in it the entire and compleat notion of ſin; or, which is all one, it cannot be ſin, in a ſtrict, proper, and adequate ſenſe of the word. Hence St. *John* in the ſame verſe tells us, that *whoſoever ſinneth, tranſgreſſeth the law.* And St. *Paul.* Rom. iv. 15. *Where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion.* Sin then muſt always ſuppoſe a law; without which there can be

neither vice nor virtue, righteouſneſs nor wickedneſs: for theſe are nothing elſe but the violation or obſervation of the law of God; or habits and ſtates reſulting from the one or the other. But this is not all: two things more muſt be remarked, to render this definition, which the apoſtle gives us of ſin, clear and full. Firſt, The law muſt be *ſufficiently revealed.* Secondly, The tranſgreſſion of it muſt be truly *voluntary.*

1. By ſufficient revelation of a divine law, every one underſtands, that the law muſt be ſo publiſhed to the man who is to be governed by it, that the *authority* and *ſenſe* of it may be, if it be not his own fault, rendered evident to him. If the divine authority of any rule or precept be doubtful and uncertain, the obligation of it will be ſo too: and it is as neceſſary that the ſenſe of the law ſhould be evident, as its authority. The law, that is penned in dark and ambiguous terms, is, properly ſpeaking, no law at all; ſince the mind of the Lawgiver is not ſufficiently made known by it. Whatever is neceſſarily to be forborn or done by us, muſt be fully and clearly preſcribed in the law of God; and if it be not, it can never be neceſſary. Men through weakneſs or deſign may enact laws that are but a heap of letters, a croud of dubious *Delphick* ſenten-

ſentences: but God can never do ſo, becauſe this is repugnant both to his wiſdom and goodneſs, and to the very end of a law too, which is to be a rule, not a ſnare; 'tis *to give underſtanding to the ſimple*; to be *a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths*; not like an *Ignis fatuus*, to betray us into brakes and precipices, and ruin, and death.

2. The tranſgreſſion muſt be a *voluntary* one. And this imports two things: 1. A knowledge of the law. 2. Conſent to the breach of it. Firſt, As to the knowledge of the law. All that I have to ſay here in a few words, is, that ignorance of the law excuſes a tranſgreſſion, when it is it ſelf excuſable; but if the ignorance it ſelf be criminal, the effect of it muſt be ſo too. We muſt never think of excuſing our ſins, by alledging an ignorance into which, not our own incapacity, or any other reaſonable cauſe, but neglect or contempt of the truth, or ſome other vicious luſt or paſſion, has betrayed us. Secondly, As to the conſent of the will; this is neceſſary to demonſtrate any action ſinful or virtuous; without this the mind will be no partner in the ſin, and by conſequence cannot be involved in the guilt of it. Whatever we cannot help, is our misfortune, not our fault; actions merely natural, or merely forced, can neither be good

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nor evil. The concurrence of reaſon and choice is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the morality of an action. All this is plainly taught us by St. *James* i. 14, 15. *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin; and ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.* Which words do certainly imply, that the ſpring and principle of ſin is within our ſelves; that 'tis our natural corruption that entices and allures us; and 'tis our conſent to its enticements that gives being to ſin, and defiles us with guilt.

From all this now put together 'tis eaſy to conclude what ſort of a deſcription we are to form of *mortal ſin*: 'tis ſuch a tranſgreſſion of the law of God, as is *vicious* in its *original*, *deliberate* in its *commiſſion*, and *miſchievous* in its *tendencies* or *effects*: the heart is corrupted and miſled by ſome luſt or other, and ſo conſents to the breach of the moral law of God, a law of eternal and immutable goodneſs: or if the ſin conſiſts in the breach of any poſitive law, it muſt yet imply in it ſome moral obliquity in the will, or it the tendency of the action, or both. So that preſumptuous, or mortal ſin, call in by what name we will, is a *deliberate* tranſgreſſion of a *known* law of God, tending to the *diſhonour* of *God*, the *injury*

ry of our *neighbour*, or the *depravation* of our *nature*. Such are thoſe ſins which the prophet *Iſaiah* exhorts thoſe who will repent, to ceaſe from. And ſuch are thoſe we have a catalogue of, *Eph.* v. *Gal.* v. and elſewhere: *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like.* Theſe are the ſins, of which, as of ſo many members, the body of ſin conſiſts: theſe conſtitute the old man: theſe are ſometimes called, *the filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, ungodlineſs, wickedneſs, iniquity, the luſts of the fleſh, worldly luſts*, and ſuch like. Theſe and the like ſins have, as I ſaid, in them very apparent ſymptoms of malignity and mortality: they are always the effect of ſome carnal and worldly luſts, prevailing over the law of the mind; and they imply a contempt of God, injuſtice to our neighbour, and ſome kind of defilement and pollution of our nature. And that theſe are the plain indications of ſuch a guilt as excludes a man from heaven and the favour of God, is very plain from the account which the ſcripture gives us both of the origin and influence of ſin; from the care it takes to fortify the heart againſt all infection; from

from the conſtant repreſentations it makes us of the ſhamefulneſs and the miſchief of ſin, even in reference to this world as well as the other. I cannot ſee any thing further neceſſary to the explication of deliberate or preſumptuous ſin, unleſs it be here fit to add, that it is mortal, though it proceed no further than the heart: there is no need at all that it ſhould be brought forth into action, to render it fatal and damnable. This is evident, not only from the nature of divine worſhip, which muſt be entire, ſincere, and ſpiritual; and therefore can no more be reconciled to the wickedneſs of our hearts, than of our actions; but alſo from the expreſs words of our Saviour, *Out of the heart proceed fornication, adultery, theft*, &c. And elſewhere he pronounces the adultery of the *heart damnable*, as well as that of the *body*, Mat. v. 28. *But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh upon a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.*

§. 2. I am next to give ſome account of the liberty of the perfect man, in reference to the ſin I have been diſcourſing of. I ſhall not need to ſtop at any general or preliminary obſervations; as, that abſtinence from ſin regards all the commandments of God alike; and to do otherwiſe,

wiſe, were to mutilate and maim religion, and to diſhonour God, while we pretend to worſhip and obey him: for the breach of any ſingle commandment is a manifeſt violation of the majeſty and authority of God, whatever obſervance we may pay all the reſt: *For he that ſaid, Do not commit adultery; ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law*, Jam. ii. 11. That the reſtraints man is to lay upon himſelf, relate no leſs to the *luſts* of the *ſoul* than the *actions* of the *body*: *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, you ſhall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven*, *Matth.* v. 10. That to begin well will avail us little, unleſs we finiſh well too. Univerſality, ſincerity, and perſeverance are generally acknowledged to be eſſential and indiſpenſable properties of ſaving, juſtifying faith. Theſe things therefore being but juſt mentioned, I proceed to the point to be enquired into and reſolved.

1. To be free from the *dominion* and *power* of mortal ſin, is the firſt and loweſt ſtep; this is indiſpenſable to ſincerity, and abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation: *Let not ſin reign in your mortal bodies, to fulfil the luſts thereof*, Rom. vi. 12. And the advancing thus far does, I acknowledge, conſtitute man in a ſtate of grace: for

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in ſcripture men are denominated righteous or wicked, not from ſingle acts of vice or virtue, but from the prevalence and dominion, from the habit or cuſtom of the one or the other: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto righteouſneſs?* Rom. vi. 16. But then I muſt here add two remarks, by way of caution. 1. We muſt not preſume too ſoon of victory over an habitual ſin. An evil habit is not ſoon broken off; nor is it an eaſy matter to reſolve, when we have ſet our ſelves free from the power of it. Sometimes the temptation does not preſent itſelf as often as it was wont, or not with the ſame advantage; ſometimes one vice reſtrains us from another; ſometimes worldly conſiderations, or ſome little change in our temper, without any thorough change in our minds, puts us out of humour for a little while with a darling ſin; and ſometimes the force and clearneſs of conviction, produces ſome pious fits, which, though they do not utterly vanquiſh a luſt, do yet force it to give way, and retreat for a while, and *interrupt* that love which they do not *extinguiſh*: all this may be, and the work not yet be done, nor our liberty yet gained. If therefore we fall, though but now and then,

then, and though at ſome diſtance of time, into the ſame ſin, we have great reaſon to be jealous of its power and our ſafety: nay, though we reſtrain our ſelves from the outward commiſſion of it; if yet we feel a ſtrong propenſion to it; if we diſcern our ſelves ready to take fire on the appearance of a temptation; if we are fond of approaching as near it as we can, and are pleaſed with thoſe indulgences which are very near a-kin to it, we have reaſon to doubt that our conqueſt is not yet entire. nay, the truth is, we cannot be on good grounds aſſured that we are maſters of our ſelves, till we have a ſettled averſion for the ſin which before we doated on, and ſhun the occaſions which before we courted, till we be poſſeſſed of a habit of that virtue which is a direct contradiction to it; and take as much pleaſure in the obedience, as ever we did in the tranſgreſſion of a divine command.

2dly, Theſe are ſome ſins of that provoking nature, ſo criminal in their birth, and miſchievous in their conſequences, that one ſingle *act* or *commiſſion* of one of theſe is equivalent to a *habit* of others; ſuch is murther, idolatry, perjury, adultery; theſe cannot be commited without renouncing *humanity* as well as *Chriſtianity*; without reſiſting the inſtincts and impulſe of nature, as well as the light of the go-

ſpel,

ſpel, and the grace of the Spirit. We muſt break through a great many difficulties and terrors, ere we can come at theſe ſins; we muſt commit *many* other, in order to commit one of theſe; we muſt deliberate long, reſolve deſperately, and in defiance of God and conſcience; and what is the *effect* of habit in other inſtances, is a neceſſary *preparative* in theſe, that is, *obduration*. In this caſe, therefore, the unhappy man, that has been guilty of any one of theſe, muſt not look upon himſelf as ſet free, when he is come to a reſolution of never repeating it again; but then when he loaths and abhors himſelf in duſt and aſhes; when he has made the utmoſt reparations of the wrong he is capable of; when, if the intereſt of virtue require it, he is content to be oppreſſed with ſhame and ſufferings: when, in one word, a long and conſtant courſe of mortification, prayers, tears and good works have waſhed off the ſtain and guilt.

2. We muſt be free, not only from a *habit*, but from ſingle *acts* of deliberate preſumptuous ſin. The reaſon is plain; mortal ſin cannot be committed without wounding the conſcience, grieving the ſpirit, and renouncing our hopes in God through Chriſt, for the time at leaſt. *The wages of ſin is death*, is true, not only of habits, but ſingle acts of deliberate ſin.

Death

death is the penalty, the ſanction of every commandment; and the commandment does not prohibit habits only, but ſingle acts too. Nor is there indeed any room to doubt or diſpute here, but in one caſe; which is, if a righteous man ſhould be taken off in the very commiſſion of a ſin, which he has fallen into. Here, indeed, much may be ſaid, and with much uncertainty. But the reſolution of this point does not, as far as I can ſee, miniſter to any good or neceſſary end; and therefore I will leave it to God. In all other caſes, every thing is clear and plain; for if the ſervant of God fall into a preſumptuous ſin, 'tis univerſally acknowledged, that he cannot recover his ſtation but by repentance. If he repent preſently, he is ſafe; but if he continue in his ſin, if he repeat it, he paſſes into a ſtate of wickedneſs, widens the breach between God and his ſoul, declines inſenſibly into a habit of ſin, and renders his wound more and more incurable. 'Tis to little purpoſe, I think, here to conſider the vaſt difference there is in the commiſſion, even of the ſame ſin, between a child of God, and a child of wrath; becauſe a child of God muſt not commit it at all: if he do, tho' it be with reluctancy; tho' it be, as it were, with an imperfect conſent, and with a divided ſoul; tho' the awe of religion and conſcience ſeems

not utterly to have forſaken him, even in the midſt of his ſin; tho' his heart ſmite him the very minute it is finiſhed, and repentance and remorſe take off the reliſh of the unhappy draught; yet ſtill 'tis ſin; 'tis in its nature damnable: and nothing but the blood of Jeſus can purge the guilt.

3. The perfect man may be ſuppoſed, not only actually to abſtain from mortal ſin, but to be advanced ſo far in the mortification of all his inordinate affections, as to do it with *eaſe* and *pleaſure*, with *conſtancy* and *delight*. For it muſt reaſonably be preſumed, that his victory over ungodly and worldly luſt, is more confirmed and abſolute; his abhorrence of them, more deep and ſenſible, more fixt and laſting, than that of a beginner or babe in Chriſt. The regenerate at firſt fears the conſequence of ſin; but by degrees he hates the ſin it ſelf. The purity of his ſoul renders him now incapable of finding any pleaſure in what he doted on before; and the love of God and virtue raiſeth him above the temptations which he was wont to fall by: *Old things are paſt away, and all things are become new.*

4. Laſtly, The perfect man's abſtinence is not only more *eaſy* and *ſteady*, but more *intire* and *compleat* alſo than that of others: he has a regard to the end and deſign

deſign of the law; to the perfection of his nature; to the purity and elevation of his ſoul; and therefore he expounds the prohibitions of the law in the moſt enlarged ſenſe, and interprets them by a ſpirit of faith and love. He is not content to refrain from actions directly criminal, but ſhuns every appearance of evil; and labours to mortify all the diſpoſitions and tendencies of his nature towards it; and to decline whatever circumſtances of life are apt to betray the ſoul into a love of this world, or the body: he has crucified the world, and the body too. That pleaſure, that honour, that power, that profit, which captivates the ſinner, tempts, and tries, and diſquiets the novice, is but a burthen, a trouble to him: he finds no guſt, no reliſh in theſe things. He is ſo far from intemperance, ſo far from wantonneſs, ſo far from pride and vanity, that could be without any diſadvantage to the intereſt of religion; he would imitate the meanneſs, the plainneſs, the laborioufneſs, the ſelf-denial of our Saviour's life; not only in diſpoſition and affection of his ſoul, but even in his outward ſtate and deportment; and would prefer it far above the pomp and ſhew of life. In one word, he inquires not how far he may *enjoy* and be *ſafe*, but how far he may *deny* himſelf and be *wiſe*: he is ſo far from

desiring forbidden satisfactions, that he is unwilling and afraid to find too much satisfaction in the natural and necessary actions of an animal life. I need not prove this to any one who has read the foregoing chapters: for it is what I have been doing throughout this treatise. It is nothing, but what is consonant to the whole tenour of the scripture; and to the example of the best times. And 'tis conformable to what the best authors have writ, who have any thing of life and spirit in their works; or have any true notion of the great design of the Christian religion, which is an heavenly conversation. Let any one but cast his eyes on St. *Basil*, or any other after him, who aimed at the same thing I now do, the promoting holiness in the world in the beauty and perfection of it; and he will acknowledge, that I am far from having carried this mater too high. I will quote but one or two passages of St. *Basil*; (*a*) his description of the perfect man with regard to his self-denial runs thus. He is one that consults the *necessities*, not the *pleasure* of his nature; and seems to grudge the time which he bestows on the support and nourishment of a corruptible body. He is so far from looking upon eating and drinking, *&c.* as an enjoyment, that he rather accounts it a task or troublesome service

(*a*) Μόλις ἡ χ῀ μικρον τ῀ ἀναγκαίων ἀπτόμενον. Καὶ ὡς λειτουργίαν ἐπαχθῆ ὑποτελοῦντα τῇ φύσει, ἡ δυσχεραίνοντα μὲν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα διατρίβης. Ὅροι κ῀ κανόνες. p. 454.

ſervice which the frailty of his nature demands at his hands. Nor was this great man more ſevere againſt the luſts of the fleſh, than againſt thoſe other branches of the love of the world, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life. (*b*) All vanity and affectation of praiſe and reſpect; all the oſtentation (*ſaith he*) and ſhew of life, is utterly unlawful for a Chriſtian. And all this is directly conſonant to his gloſs (*c*) on thoſe words of St. *Paul, They that uſe the world as not abuſing it.* Whatever is beyond *uſe* is *abuſe*; directly conſonant to his definition of temperance. (*d*) That it is the extirpation of ſin; the exterminati-on of unruly paſſions, and the mortification of the body, extending even to the *natural* appetites and affections of it.

(*b*) Ἡ κενοδοξία, καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια, καὶ τὸ σφὸς ὄλιγδιξεν τι φαίνεσθαι, ὅλως ὄλη παντὸς σφαίγματος Χριστιανοῖς ἀπηγόρευται. p. 456.

(*c*) Παράχρησις δέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπὲρ τ χρείαν διάπανη. p. 457.

(*d*) Ἐστὶν δὲ ἡ Ἐγκράτεια, ἁμαρτιᾶς ἀναίρεσις, σαθῶν ἀπαλλοτρίωσις, σώματος νέκρωσις, μέχρι καὶ αὐτῶν φυσικῶν σαθημάτων τε καὶ ἐπιθυμίων. pag. 445.

I know not what ſcruples or miſtakes the doctrine I here advance concerning this part of my perfect man's liberty, may be encountered with: but I am confident, I have given no juſt occaſion for any. I do not ſay of the perfect, with *Jovinian*, that they cannot fall; but I ſay, that they may, and ought to ſtand; and, if it be not their own fault, will do ſo. I do not affirm of them, as the hereticks in *Vincen-*

tius Lyrinenſis did of their party, that are privileged from ſin by a peculiar grace and tranſcendent favour; but I affirm, that they ſhall not want grace to preſerve them from it, unleſs they be wanting to themſelves. I do not go about to maintain, that God ſees no ſin in his children; but I maintain, that mortal ſin is not the ſport of his children. But do not I in this fall in with the *Papiſts*, who aſſert the poſſibility of keeping the commands of God? I anſwer, that taking them in the ſenſe, in which they themſelves in the conference at *Ratisbone* defend this doctrine, I do. They there tell us, that, when they talk thus, they take the law or commands of God, not in a ſtrict and rigid, but in a favourable and equitable, *i. e.* a goſpel conſtruction: and this is ſo far from being heterodox, that *Davenant* accounts it a plain giving up the queſtion in controverſy. But am I not run into the error of the *Pelagians* and *Quakers?* I anſwer, if the one or the other aſſert, that the perfect man paſſes thorough the whole courſe of life without falling into any ſin; or, that in the beſt part of life, he is impeccable, and not ſubject to ſin (as in the heat of diſputation their adverſaries ſeem ſometimes to faſten on them) I am at a wide diſtance from them. But if they teach,

teach, that the perfect man has grace and ſtrength enough to forbear wilful ſin, and that many actually do ſo, I am, I muſt confeſs, exactly of their mind. But then I am, at the ſame time, of the ſame mind with St. *Auſtin*, and St. *Jerome* too; for they teach the very ſame doctrine: for they never contended about the poſſibility of freedom or deliverance from *mortal* ſin, but only from *venial*. St. *Jerome* * ſhall explain his own ſenſe, *Etenim abſque vitio, quod græce dicitur* Καχί, *hominem poſſe eſſe aio:* Ἀναμάρτητοι, *id eſt, ſine Peccato, eſſe nego.* Which is the ſame thing that St. *Auſtin* commonly admits; that man may be *ſine Crimine*, but not *ſine Peccato*; without mortal, but not without venial ſin. And in this, they are certainly of the mind of the ſcripture; which every-where repreſents the perfect man, as holy, blameleſs, undefiled, without ſpot, walking with God: and, in one word, as free from ſin. If any man can reconcile theſe texts, which are very numerous, with mortal ſin, I will not ſay in the beſt ſtate of the beſt men, but a ſtate of ſincerity and regeneration, I will acknowledge my miſtake. But till then I connot but think, the doctrine I advance, neceſſary to eſtabliſh the true notion of holineſs, and convince us of our obligation to it. This doctrine

* *Dial. Secund. ad Pelag.* p. 189.

is again neceſſary to wipe off thoſe aſperſions and calumnies the *Quakers* caſt upon our Church; as if it held, that the regenerate themſelves may continue in their ſins; nay, cannot be freed from them. Our Church teaches indeed (*Artic.* 4.) that the moſt perfect men are never utterly exempt from defects, failings, and human infirmities; and I believe they themſelves are not confident enough to teach otherwiſe: only they will not call theſe infirmities ſins: and and then the whole controverſy is reduced to this; we agree in the thing, but differ in the name: and in this difference, we are not only on the humbler, but the ſafer ſide too: for acknowledging them ſins, we ſhall be the better diſpoſed ſure, to be ſorry for them, to beg pardon for them, and watch againſt them.

The fruit of this liberty has been ſufficiently accounted for in *chap.* 3. And therefore I proceed.

§. 3. To propoſe ſome rules for the attainment of it.

1. The mind muſt be grounded and rooted in the faith; it muſt be thoroughly convinced and perſuaded of theſe great articles of the Chriſtian religion, That there is a God, and ſuch a God, a holy, juſt, omniſcient, and omnipotent one; the incarnation,

carnation, ſuffering and glory of the bleſſed Jeſus; a judgment to come, and the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another life. The firm belief of theſe things does naturally promote theſe two effects. 1. It will awaken a ſinner out of his lethargy and ſecurity; it will diſturb him in his ſinful enjoyments, and fill his mind with guilty fears, and uneaſy reflections. And when the man finds no reſt, no ſecurity in his ſins, this will naturally oblige him to endeavour the conqueſt of them. But then we muſt not ſtifle and ſuppreſs theſe thoughts; we muſt give conſcience full liberty; we muſt hear the dictates of our own minds patiently; and conſider ſeriouſly thoſe terrible truths, which they lay before us; till we go from this exerciſe deeply impreſſed with ſuch notions as theſe: that our ſins, ſooner or later, will certainly bring upon us temporal and eternal miſery: that nothing but ſincere righteouſneſs can produce true and laſting happineſs: that it is a dreadful danger to dally too long with indignation, or preſume too far on the mercy of a juſt, and holy, and almighty God: that the neglecting the great ſalvation, tender'd by the goſpel, and procured by the bleſſed Jeſus; the ſlighting the blood of the covenant, and grieving the Holy Spirit (all which we do by wilful ſin) is a guilt, that will ſink down the obſtinate

obſtinate ſinner into the loweſt hell; and render his condition more intolerable than that of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. 2. The ſecond effect of the firm belief of theſe goſpel truths, is, that it begets in us a contempt of this world, and all the things of it. To him that believes; how ſhort is time compared to eternity? how falſe, how empty are the pleaſures of ſin, compared with thoſe of heaven? how inſignificant the eſteem or love of man to that of God? how worthleſs are all our worldly hopes and pretenſions in reſpect of an intereſt in Jeſus? Now the ſoul, that is once thoroughly poſſeſſed with theſe notions, what will it not do, what will it not ſuffer, rather than fall ſhort of, or forfeit its crown? In what ſtate will it not be contented; nay, in what ſtate will it not abound in joy, whilſt it holds faſt the ſtedfaſtneſs of its hope, and is ſecure of the love of Jeſus? Here begins that purity of heart, which is the fountain of true Epicuriſm; that greatneſs of mind, which alone is true honour and fortitude. But, that faith may have theſe effects upon us, it muſt not be only a *true*, but a *lively* faith: therefore my

2. Second Rule, or, if you pleaſe, another branch of the former rule, ſhall be this. They that will be free indeed, muſt not only believe the great truths of the goſpel,

goſpel, but muſt frequently and ſeriouſly ponder them, till they have imprinted in themſelves as clear, diſtinct and perfect *idea's* of them as we are capable of. This will ſoon mortify the appetites of the body, correct our falſe opinions of worldly things: and baffle all the ſophiſtry and confidence of luſt. A lively faith, is a faith that imports the moſt clear and natural, the moſt full and enlarged notions of its objects; a faith, that not only looks upon the articles of our creed as true, but beholds them in a manner as preſent; and ſo repreſented and drawn to the life, that they fill the ſoul with great and moving conſiderations. This faith does not only believe that there is a God; but it beholds him, and walks before him as preſent; it ſees him arrayed in all his glory, and in all his majeſty, in all the power and all the terrors, in all the beauties and all the graces of the divine Nature: it does not only believe, that there are rewards and puniſhments; but is extremely ſenſible of the terrors of the one, and attractions of the other; and looks upon both as at the door. It does not only acknowledge a Mediator; but takes a full view of the miſery of that ſtate, wherein we lay thro' ſin; and of the bleſſedneſs of that, into which we are tranſlated by the redemption, which is in Jeſus. It contemplates this Mediator in all

all the ſeveral ſteps of condeſcenſion and humiliation; in all the tenderneſs and tranſports of his paſſion; in all the melancholy ſcenes of his ſufferings, and the bright and chearful ones of his glory. This is the faith that ſets us free.

3. We muſt not ſtop in faith, till it be made perfect in love. We muſt meditate divine truths till they have fired our ſouls; till they have enkindled our affections; till we be poſſeſſed by an ardent love of God, of Jeſus, of righteouſneſs, and of heaven; till all our other deſires and paſſions be converted into, and ſwallowed up of love; till God becomes the center of our ſouls; and in him we reſt, in him we glory, and in him we rejoyce. O love! how great and glorious are the things that are ſaid of thee! 'tis thou who doſt impregnate and animate faith itſelf: 'tis thou who doſt ſurmount the difficulties of duty, and make the yoke of Chriſt eaſy, and his burden light: 'tis thou, who doſt caſt out fear, and make religion full of pleaſure: 'tis thou, that doſt make us watchful againſt temptations, and impatient under the interruptions of duty: 'tis thou, that makeſt us diſreliſh the pleaſures of this world, and long to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt. Here is the liberty of the ſons of God. Bleſſed are they, even in this world, who attain it. But one caution

I must here add, that our love must not be a *flash*, a *fit*; but a steddy and well-setled affection; an affection that has the *warmth* of *passion*, and the *firmness* of *habit*. We must therefore, by repeated meditations and prayers, daily nourish this flame of the altar, and not suffer it to go out.

4. We must never be at rest, till we have possessed our minds with a perfect *hatred* of the sin which we are most subject to. The love of God, his long-suffering and forbearance, the sufferings of Jesus, the struglings of the spirit, the peace and pleasure of holiness, the guilt and vexation, the shame and punishment of sin, its ill influence on our present perfection and happiness, on our peace and hopes, are proper topicks to effect this. A thorough hatred of sin, once setled and rooted in us, will produce that sorrow, that indignation, that watchfulness, that zeal, which will remove us far enough, not only from the sin, but also from the ordinary temptations to it; and place us almost without the danger of a relapse.

To this fourth rule, I should add this other: that when once a man has resolved upon a new course of life, whatever difficulties he finds in his way, whatever baffles he meets with, he must never quit the design of virtue and life; he must never give over fighting till he conquer: the

the reaſon is plain, for he muſt either *conquer* or *die*. But this belonging rather to perſeverance in virtue, than the beginning of it, therefore I but juſt mention it.

5. It will not be imprudent in this moral, as in phyſical cures, to obſerve diligently, and follow the motions and tendencies of nature. Where there are ſeeds of generoſity and honour; the turpitude and ſhame of ſin, the baſeneſs and ingratitude of it, the love of God and of Jeſus, and ſuch like, are fit topicks to dwell upon. Where fear is more apt to prevail, there the terrors of the Lord are the moſt powerful motives: and ſo whatever the frame and conſtitution of nature be, it will not be difficult to find arguments in the goſpel adapted to it, which will be ſo much the more *prevalent*, as they are the more *natural*.

6. Laſtly, We muſt uſe all means to obtain the Spirit of God; and to increaſe and cheriſh his influence: we muſt ask, and ſeek, and knock, *i e.* we muſt pray, and meditate, and travel with patience and with importunity, that our heavenly Father may give us his Holy Spirit: and, when we have it, we muſt not grieve it by any deliberate ſin; nor quench it by ſecurity or negligence, by ſenſual freedoms and preſumption; but we muſt cheriſh every

every motion, improve every desire and passion that it works in us; we must shun every appearance of evil; we must press on towards perfection; we must watch unto prayer; we must spend the time of our sojourning here in fear; we must rejoyce and glory in the Lord; and we must wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Christ Jesus. And now I have finished what I had to say on this subject, of the perfect man's liberty as it relates to mortal or wilful sin: I have shewed what this sin is; and how far man may be freed from it, referring the reader to *chap.* 4. for the fruit of this freedom. I have here, lastly, given that advice which I thought most serviceable to the attainment of it. And through this whole chapter, I have had regard, not only to perfection, but sincerity; it being indeed improper to do otherwise, since we cannot arrive at the one, but through the other. For sincerity is Perfection in its infancy or non-age; and Perfection is nothing else but sincerity cultivated by meditation and discipline, and cherished by the the influence of heaven. And now let no man's heart fail him, while he contemplates the difficulties which block up the way to his liberty. The way indeed is steep, and the top is high; but serenity and

and happineſs, ſecurity and glory dwell there. Many indeed are the temptations which would forbid our aſcent, and thruſt us down; but we are armed all over; they cannot hurt us; the Spirit ſupports and encourages us; and nothing but our cowardiſe and inconſtancy can prevent our ſucceſs: *Watch ye, ſtand faſt, quit ye like men, be ſtrong*; and then you ſhall be ſure to conquer and enter into reſt.

CHAP. VII.

Of unfruitfulneſs, *as it conſiſts in* idleneſs. Idleneſs, *either habitual or accidental. Conſiderations to deter man from the ſin of* idleneſs.

UNfruitfulneſs is a fit ſubject to conclude a diſcourſe of *liberty* with, or begin one of *zeal*; for lying, like a tract of ground, between two bordering kingdoms, it may indifferently be laid to either. As it implies a direct oppoſition to ſpiritual life and ſincerity, it naturally falls in under the conſideration of zeal: as it implies a ſervile ſubjection to ſome vile luſt or other, it naturally falls in under the conſideration of liberty: ſo that by allotting it this place, I ſhall at once compleat my reflections on the argument of liberty,

Barrenneſs, or unfruitfulneſs, may in general beſt be underſtood by comparing it with a ſtate of *wickedneſs:* from which, as it is uſually diſtinguiſhed in the notion of the vulgar, ſo does it really differ on many accounts. The one has in it an air of *defiance*, the other of *unconcernment* for religion; the one *forgets* God, the other *contemns* him; the one has no *reliſh* nor *ſavour* of that which is *good*, the other finds too much *guſt* and *pleaſure* in that which is *evil*; the one makes us by degrees *enemies*, the other *ſtrangers* to God. In ſhort, there is little doubt to be made, but that the *omiſſion* of a *duty*, and the *commiſſion* of a *crime*; *lukewarmneſs* in that which is *good*, and *eagerneſs* and *confidence* in that which is *evil*, may, and generally do, differ very widely in the degrees of guilt: from hence it is (the ſinner being always a partial and indulgent judge of himſelf) that it is not unuſual for many, who ſeem to have ſome abhorrence of wickedneſs, to be far enough from apprehending much evil, or much danger in unfruitfulneſs. This is a fatal error; it fruſtrates the great deſign of religion, and robs it of its trueſt honour, good works. For what can religion effect by that man, who retains nothing of it but the bare form and profeſſion, and dares promiſe himſelf not only impunity, but a

heaven, in an uſeleſs and unprofitable life?

Unfruitfulneſs, if more particularly enquired into, conſiſts in two things; a *neglect* of *duty*; or a *lifeleſs* and *unprofitable* performance of it. The former I will call *idleneſs*; the latter *lukewarmneſs*, *coldneſs*, *formality*; and treat of each in order; of the former in this, and of the latter in the following chapter. And becauſe each of them are encumbered with miſtakes and errors, which ariſe not only from ſelf-love and partiality, but alſo from ſhallowneſs of judgment, joined with tenderneſs of conſcience; I ſhall endeavour ſo to manage this ſubject, as neither to diſcourage the weak, nor embolden the careleſs.

§. 1. Of idleneſs. The omiſſion of a duty may be either *habitual*, or *occaſional* and *accidental*: and accordingly the caſe of omiſſion may be very different.

1. An *habitual omiſſion* of duty cannot conſiſt with ſincerity: a general neglect of duty defeats the main end of religion, which is to honour God, adorn our holy profeſſion, and promote the good of human ſociety; all which can never be attained but by following after righteouſneſs, and abounding in the fruits of it. By this

this rule, an *idle*, though *innocent*, life, muſt neceſſarily be accounted *irreligious* and *vicious*, being a flat contradiction to our excellent profeſſion. He, who does not pray, nor meditate, nor purſue any end of charity, though he be otherwiſe civil and regular in his life; yet becauſe he does not work righteouſneſs, becauſe he is ſo far from imitating the zeal and charity of the bleſſed Jeſus, that he acts directly repugnant to both; therefore muſt he not be looked upon as a diſciple of Jeſus, but as an alien and a ſtranger. He, whoſe life is ſpent in *vanity* or *drudgery*, in pleaſure or buſineſs, though his pleaſure be not *impure*, nor his buſineſs *unjuſt*; yet is he, before God, a criminal, becauſe unprofitable; he has received the grace of God in vain; the light of the goſpel has riſen upon him in vain; and he has ſerved no intereſt of virtue or religion in his generation; and therefore he will be excluded heaven, with the *ſlothful ſervant, who hid his Maſter's talent in a napkin*, Luke xix. 20.

2. The caſe of an *accidental* or *occaſional* omiſſion of duty, is very different from that of *habitual* neglect of it; an *occaſional omiſſion* may be, not only *lawful*, but *neceſſary*; but the *neglect* of duty never can be either. The circumſtances of po-

ſitive duty, and the meaſures and degrees of moral good, are not ſtrictly fixed and ſettled; and therefore a ſingle omiſſion, either in the one or the other, where-ever there is a ſufficient reaſon for it, can neither grieve the ſpirit, nor fruſtrate the deſign of religion; nor conſequently imply any corruption in the heart. But then we muſt take care,

1. That our omiſſion be not too frequent. We muſt always have regard, in this matter of duty, to the great end and deſigns of its injunction; we muſt take care that our omiſſions in moral duties be not ſo often, that either the honour of our religion, or the welfare of our neighbour, ſuffer by it. Nor muſt we ſo often omit inſtrumental duties, prayers, reading, the ſacrament, and the like, as thereby to *abate*, or much leſs *extinguiſh*, our ſpiritual guſt and fervour. Omiſſion of duty, too often repeated, breeds a kind of indifference, or lukewarmneſs; and lukewarmneſs ſoon paſſes into coldneſs and inſenſibleneſs; and this often ends in a reprobate mind, and an utter averſion for religion.

2dly, We muſt endeavour ſome way or other to compenſate the omiſſion of a duty; to make up by charity, what we have defalked from devotion; or to ſupply by ſhort ejaculations, what we have been forced

ced to retrench from fixed and regular offices of prayer. And he that watches for opportunities, either of *improvement*, or *doing good*, will, I believe, never have reaſon to complain of the want of them: God will put into his hands either the one or the other; and for the choice, he cannot do better, than follow God's.

3*dly*, A ſingle omiſſion muſt never proceed from a *ſinful motive*; from a love of the world, or indulgence to the body; *neceſſity* or *charity* is the only juſt and proper apology for it. *Inſtrumental* or poſitive duties may give way to *moral* ones; the religion of the *means*, to the religion of the *end*; and in moral duties, the leſs may give way to the greater. But *duty* muſt never give way to *ſin*, nor *religion* to *intereſt* or *pleaſure*.

Having thus briefly given an account, what omiſſion of duty is, and what is not ſinful; and conſequently ſo ſettled the notion of idleneſs, that neither the careleſs, nor the ſcrupulous can eaſily miſtake their caſe; I will now propoſe ſuch *conſiderations* as I judge moſt likely to deter men from it; and ſuch *advice* as may be the beſt guard and preſervative againſt it.

1. The firſt thing I would have every one lay to heart is, that a ſtate of idleneſs is a ſtate of damnable ſin. Idleneſs is directly repugnant to the great ends of God,

both in our creation and redemption. As to our *creation*; can we imagine that God, who created not any thing but for ſome excellent end, ſhould create man for none, or for a ſilly one? The ſpirit within us is an active and vivacious principle; our rational faculties capacitate and qualify us for doing *good*; this is the proper work of reaſon, the trueſt and moſt natural pleaſure of a rational ſoul. Who can think now, that our wiſe Creator lighted this candle within us, that we might oppreſs and ſtifle it by negligence and idleneſs? That he contrived and deſtined ſuch a mind to ſquander and fool away its talents in vanity and impertinence? As to our *redemption*, 'tis evident both what the deſign of it is, and how oppoſite idleneſs is to it. Chriſt gave himſelf for us, *to redeem us from all iniquity*; *and to purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. And this is what our regeneration, or ſanctification aims at: *We are God's workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them*, Epheſ. ii. 10. How little then can a uſeleſs and barren life anſwer the expectations of God? What a miſerable return muſt it be to the blood of his Son; and how utterly muſt it diſappoint all the purpoſes of his Word and Spirit? But what need I argue further?

the

the truth I contend for is the expreſs and conſtant doctrine of the ſcriptures: is not *idleneſs* and *fulneſs of bread* reckoned amongſt the ſins of *Sodom?* What means the ſentence againſt the *barren fig-tree*, *Luke* xiii. 7. but the deſtruction and damnation of the idle and the ſluggiſh? The indignation of God is not enkindled againſt the barrenneſs of *trees*, but *men*. What can be plainer than the condemnation of the unprofitable ſervant, who periſhed becauſe he had not improved his talent? *Mat.* xxv. 38. And how frequently does the apoſtle declare himſelf againſt the *idle* and *diſorderly?* And all this proceeds upon plain and neceſſary grounds: our Lord was an example of virtue, as well as innocence; and he did not only refrain from *doing evil*, but he *went about doing good*. We can never ſatisfy the intention of divine precepts by *negative* righteouſneſs: when God prohibits the *filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit*, he enjoins *the perfecting holineſs in his fear:* when he forbids us *to do evil*, he at the ſame time preſcribes *the learning to do well*. What need I multiply more words? Idleneſs is a flat contradicton to faith, hope, charity; to fear, vigilance, mortification; and therefore certainly muſt be a damning ſin: *Theſe* are all active and vigorous principles; but idleneſs enfeebles and diſ-ſpirits, manacles and fetters us:

Theſe are pure, ſtrict, and ſelf-denying principles; but idleneſs is ſoft and indulgent: *theſe* conquer the world and the body, raiſe and exalt the mind; but idleneſs is far from enterprizing any thing, from attempting any thing that is good; it pampers the body, and effeminates and diſſolves the mind; and finally, whatever innocence or inoffenſiveneſs it may pretend to, it does not only terminate in ſin, but has its beginning from it; from ſtupidity and ignorance, from vanity and levity, from ſoftneſs and ſenſuality, from ſome prevailing luſt or other.

2. Next after the *nature*, the *conſequences* of idleneſs are to be conſidered; and if it be taken in the utmoſt latitude, there is ſcarce any ſin which is more juſtly liable to ſo many tragical accuſations; for it is the parent of *diſhonour* and *poverty*, and of moſt of the *ſins* and *calamities* of this mortal life. But at preſent I view it only as it is drawn with a half face, and that the much leſs deformed of the two: I conſider it here as pretending to *innocence*; and flattering it ſelf with the hopes of happineſs: and yet even thus, ſuppoſing it as harmleſs and inoffenſive as it can be, yet ſtill theſe will be the miſerable effects of it: it will rob religion, and the world, of the ſervice due to both: it will bereave us of the pleaſure of life, and the comfort of death;

death; and ſend us down at laſt to a curſed eternity. For where are the virtues that ſhould maintain the order and beauty of human ſociety; that ſhould relieve and redreſs the miſeries of the world? Where are the virtues that ſhould vindicate the honour of religion, and demonſtrate its divinity as effectually as predictions or miracles can do? Where are the bright examples that ſhould convert the unbelieving part of mankind, and inflame the believing part with a generous emulation? Certainly the lazy Chriſtian, the ſlothful ſervant, can pretend to nothing of this kind. As to the *pleaſure* of life, if true and laſting, if pure and ſpiritual, 'tis eaſy to diſcern from what fountains it muſt be drawn. Nothing but poverty of ſpirit can procure our peace, nothing but purity of heart our pleaſure. But ah! how far are the idle and unactive from theſe virtues? Faith, love, and hope, are the ſeeds of them: victories and triumphs, devotion, alms, and good works are the fruits of them: but what a ſtranger to theſe is the drone and ſluggard? Then for the *comfort of death*, it muſt proceed from a well-ſpent life: he that ſees nothing but a vaſt ſolitude and wilderneſs behind him, will never, like the *Iſraelites*, ſee a *Canaan* before him. Life muſt be filled with good works, or elſe death will look but dark

dark and gloomy: when the conſcience inquires every where after the effects of the Word, and the Spirit, and the blood of Jeſus, and can diſcover in all the parts, in all the paths of life, no tracks of any thing but *fancy* and *fortune*, *humour* and *indulgence*; how will it ſhrink, and faint, and tremble! what penſive, melancholy doubts will damp and choak its hope! and how can it be otherwiſe? Alas! the mind of a Chriſtian is ſufficiently informed that every man ſhall receive according to what he has done in the body; God will judge every man according to his works; what then muſt become of him who has none to ſhew? If immortality and glory, if life and peace be the reward of *well-doing*, nay, of *patient continuance* in well-doing, what will become of the drowſy, the ſupine and careleſs, the ſot and the ſluggiſh, who have ſlept, and fooled, and trifled away life?

3. I might aggravate the guilt of idleneſs, by taking an eſtimate of the *talents* it waſtes, the *obligations* it ſlights, and the *hopes* it forfeits. I might render man more jealous and apprehenſive of falling into it, by obſerving how generally it prevails; which is a plain proof, either of the ſtrength of the temptation, or of our propenſion; a plain proof either that there is I know not what ſecret magick in the

the ſin, or elſe that the cheat it impoſes upon the world is a very clever, a very dexterous one. But I have ſaid enough; and where the former conſiderations fail, theſe will hardly ſucceed: therefore I will now paſs on from arguments to advice, which was the next thing propoſed to be done.

And here my advice muſt have regard to two different ſorts of perſons. 1. To ſuch as are born to plentiful or competent fortunes. 2. To ſuch as are to raiſe their own, or to provide for the ſupport and maintenance of themſelves and their families, by their labour or induſtry in ſome calling or profeſſion. To the former the beſt directions I can give, are theſe:

1. He that is maſter of his time, ought to devote the more to religion: *To whom God hath given much, of him much will be required*: Nor has ſuch an one any excuſe left, either for omiſſion, or a haſty and curſory preformance of duty, but one, one that will encreaſe his guilt, *i. e.* lazineſs, pleaſure, or ſome ſin or other. Such an one therefore ought to be conſtant and diligent in frequenting the publick aſſemblies of the church; his attendance upon prayers, ſacraments, ſermons, muſt be ſuch as becomes a man, who, as it has pleaſed God, ſeems born not to provide for life, but only to live, only to improve and enjoy life, and carry on the noble deſigns of it; and as becomes

becomes a man whoſe good or ill example is of ſuch vaſt importance to the ſervice or diſſervice of religion. Nor muſt ſuch an one's attendance on the publick excuſe him from the religious offices of the cloſet, or his family; he ought to abound in each: he may be more frequent in meditation and prayer, in reading and inſtruction, and perform each with more juſtneſs and ſolemnity than others can.

2. Perſons of fortune ought to be careful in the choice of intimates and friends. Converſation is not always a loſs, but ſometimes a gain of time: we often need to have our forgetfulneſs relieved, our drowſineſs awakened by the diſcourſes and reflections of our friends. If diſcourſe were generally ſeaſoned with grace, converſation would be the greateſt bleſſing; if with ſenſe and reaſon, innocence and prudence, it would be the moſt agreeable entertainment of human life. But how miſchievous is the acquaintance which infects us with vanity and lightneſs of ſpirit, which ſhews us nothing but a gaudy outſide and a frothy ſoul! whoſe example binds men in civility to be fooliſh, and makes confidence, and vice, and mis-ſpence of time, a faſhion.

3. It were to be wiſhed, that perſons of the beſt rank, were ever bred up to ſomething; to ſomething that might improve, to ſomething that might amuſe and innocently

cently engage their minds; to ſomething that might employ life, without incumbring it. And yet, alas! what need I wiſh this? How many excellent qualities are neceſſary to render a gentleman worthy of the ſtation where God has placed him? Let him purſue *theſe*. How many are the virtues, how many the duties to which a Chriſtian is obliged? Let him attend *theſe*. There is a great deal requiſite to make a good maſter, a good husband, a good father, a good ſon, a good neighbour, a good pariſhioner, an excellent ſubject, and an excellent friend; and yet there are many other relations beſides theſe. In a word, there is no man, who, when he ſhall appear before God, will not be found to have omitted many duties; and to have performed many other with leſs care and diligence than he ought; and ſurely ſuch an one cannot juſtly complain for want of buſineſs. I doubt rather on the contrary, that whoever takes a juſt and full view of things, will have reaſon to complain, that life is ſhort, and our work great; that let us uſe all the diligence we can, and be as frugal of our time as we will, we arrive much ſooner at a maturity of years, than of knowledge and virtue.

4. The diverſions of perſons of this quality ought to be well regulated; ſuch as become the character of a *gentleman*, and the dignity of a *Chriſtian*; that is, they muſt

muſt be neither *mean* nor *vicious*. But I have treated this and the foregoing heads more copiouſly in *human life*; to which I refer my reader.

As to ſuch, in the next place, who are engaged in a profeſſion, I have particularly conſidered their ſtate in ſeveral places, and find little to add here, but only to mind them, that they may be guilty of idleneſs too; that their idleneſs is the more criminal, the leſs temptation they have to it. They may neglect the duties of their calling, I mean their ſecular calling; and if they be unfaithful and negligent in their temporal concern, it is not to be expected that they ſhould be more ſolicitous and induſtrious about their ſpiritual one. They may again ſuffer the cares of this life to thruſt out thoſe of another; and then they are truly idle and ſlothful ſervants to God, how induſtrious and faithful ſoever they are to the world: for life is but waſted and miſ-ſpent, if it makes not proviſion for *eternity*; and it matters little whether it be waſted in *pleaſure* or in *drudgery*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Unfruitfulneſs, *as it conſiſts in* Lukewarmneſs *or* formality. *The cauſes from which Lukewarmneſs proceeds. The folly, guilt, and danger of a* Laodicean *ſtate.*

IN the former chapter I conſidered that part of Unfruitfulneſs which conſiſts in the *omiſſion* of duty: I am now to conſider another part of it, which conſiſts in too *perfunctory* a *performance* of it. Beſides thoſe who are truly unprofitable, becauſe they ſlight or neglect the duties of religion; there is another ſort of men, who at the laſt day will fall under the ſame character and condemnation; not becauſe they perform no duties, but becauſe their performance of them is depreciated by Coldneſs and formality: men, who make a fair appearance of religion, and yet have no inward ſpiritual life: men, who do generally obſerve the external duties of religion, but with ſo little guſt, with ſuch indifference and Lukewarmneſs, that they are neither acceptable to God, nor uſeful to themſelves. This ſtate of deadneſs may be conſidered either more *generally*, as it runs through the whole courſe of our lives and actions; or more *particularly*, in this or that inſtance of religion.

1. When

1. When 'tis ſo general, that the bent and courſe of our lives is, for want of reliſh of the things of God, perverted and depraved; when we have no deſigns, drive on no ends, that are ſuitable to the *excellency* and *dignity* of our *nature*; to the *holineſs* of our *profeſſion*, and to the great and manifeſt *obligations* of God: when we have no joys or pleaſures, no thirſts or appetites, that do truly become a Chriſtian; when we make no progreſs, no advance towards our great end; when our diſcourſes and employments have no tincture of the Spirit, and no tendency to edification. I think we may then boldly conclude, that this is a ſtate of *carnality* and *death*. And that this want of reliſh in the general courſe of our lives, proceeds from a real want of a ſincere faith, and true illumination. For were the mind once truly enlightened; were it once clearly convinced, firmly and habitually perſuaded, of the beauty and excellency of the things of God; as we ſhould have notions different from thoſe of worldly carnal men, ſo would there conſequently be a difference in the nature of our hopes and fears, of our deſires and deſigns, of our joys and ſorrows; and as neceſſarily in the main ſcope and tendency of our converſation. Whoever therefore finds this general ſtupidity in the courſe

courſe of his life, let him not flatter himſelf in the performance of any of the duties of religion: he has a corrupt, carnal, and blind heart; his performances proceed not from true principles, and have not that life and vigour in them that they ought; they are as different from the performances of a man truly regenerate and ſanctified, as the civilities and complements of a well-bred acquaintance, from the ſuſtantial offices of a ſincere and affectionate friend. Nor can any man, who will take the leaſt pains to examine himſelf, be ignorant of, or miſtaken in the condition of his ſoul, if this be it. For whoever will act honeſtly and impartially, ought not to paſs a ſentence of abſolution on himſelf, upon the bare performance of ſome relative, or inſtrumental duties of religion; but he ought to inquire, firſt, what virtues he practiſes, which put him upon *expence*, *hazard*, or *travel*; what works of piety or charity he performs; and what proportion they bear to his ability. Next, he ought to conſider the *deſign* and *end* he propoſes to himſelf in all his religious performances; whether he ſeek the honour of God, the welfare of man, and his own improvement and growth in goodneſs; or whether he does this merely to acquit himſelf of a task, and diſcharge himſelf of what he takes

for granted as a duty, tho' he finds no pleaſure, no advantage in it. Thirdly, He muſt reflect upon the *frame* and *temper* of his mind in reference to theſe duties; what hunger and thirſt he has for righteouſneſs; what warmth, ardor, elevation, or earneſtneſs of mind accompanies his performances; what peace and pleaſure his reflection on them; or whether religion be not a burthen to him, or ſomething to which cuſtom only reconciles him. Laſtly, He ought to examine what operation, what *influence* his religious performances have upon him. Prayer, hearing, reading, and ſuch-like duties, do naturally tend to enlighten the mind, purify the heart, increaſe our love, ſtrengthen our faith, and confirm our hope; and therefore, where this is not the effect of them, we may conclude, that they are not diſcharged in that manner and with that ſincerity they ought. He therefore, that will examine himſelf aright, muſt not ask himſelf how often he reads, how often he hears, *&c.* and then reſt there; but muſt ask himſelf what *effect* theſe performances have had upon his mind; which he will ſoon diſcern, if he demand of himſelf, what the bent and ſcope of his life is; how much he advances and improves in the conqueſt of any vice, and the attainment

ment of any virtue; what he loves, or what he hates; what eſteem he has for the things of God, and what for the things of men. And, in a word, how he follows after univerſal righteouſneſs; and how he increaſes in purity of heart, and poverty of ſpirit.

2. *Lukewarmneſs*, and *coldneſs*, may be conſidered more *particulary*, as it diſcovers it ſelf in the performance of this or that duty; in hearing, reading, prayer, and participation of the Lord's Supper. Now, 'tis certain, that there is a deadneſs in theſe duties, which proceeds from a *carnal* and *unſanctified* heart, and is a plain ſymptom of a *ſtate of ſin*: and yet it is too common, that they, who are ſubject to it, make little reflection upon it, and are little concerned for it. On the other hand, many complain of lifeleſneſs in duty, where there is no juſt ground for this complaint; and this is no ſmall evil to ſuch; for it diſturbs the peace of their minds, damps the chearfulneſs and alacrity of their ſervice, and clogs and encumbers their religion with needleſs doubts and ſcruples. Some have gone about to ſet this matter right very unskilfully; and whilſt they have, as they thought, ſhunned *enthuſiaſtic* raptures, and *irregular* heats, have really betrayed the cauſe of *true* and *ſolid fervency of ſpirit*; and talked of prayer, and ſuch other du-

ties, in ſuch a manner, as cannot but reflect diſadvantageouſly on themſelves, amongſt ſuch, as are moderately verſed in the ſcriptures, and have any experience of the power of God's Word and Spirit upon their ſouls. But what ſurprizes me moſt is, that ſome, of very deſerved repute, have taught, that the *ſeeking ſpiritual pleaſure in prayer*, is an *enemy to Perfection*: that *heat* and *ardor* of ſpirit in prayer, does often happen to the *weakeſt* Chriſtians; and very ſeldom to the *perfect*. But my buſineſs not being to combat the opinions of men, but to advance truths in the moſt charitable, and in the moſt effectual manner that I can: therefore, without taking notice of the motives or reaſons which have byaſſed any on this ſubject, I will lay down two or three propoſitions, which will, I hope, clear this matter, and promote the deſign I am now carrying on.

1. then, *Lifeleſneſs* or lukewarmneſs in theſe duties muſt never be *conſtant*. There is a vaſt difference between *habitual* and *accidental* coldneſs in duty; the former is the ſymptom of worldly, carnal, and unregenerate minds; but not the latter. Many are the accidents which diſturb and indiſpoſe the body; many are the things which diſtract and clog the mind: from

from both which becauſe we ſhall never be utterly free in this world; therefore our devotion will never be ſo conſtant and uniform, but that it will have its *interruptions* and *allays*; and dulneſs and lifeleſneſs will ſometimes ſeize upon the beſt of Chriſtians. But then, if this ſpiritual deadneſs in religious exerciſes be *fixed*, *conſtant*, and *habitual*, it muſt needs be a proof of a corrupt mind: for 'tis impoſſible that there ſhould be a true principle of grace within, which ſhould never, or very rarely, ſhew it ſelf in the ſincerity and fervency of our devotion. How is it poſſible that that man, who is generally ſlight and ſuperficial in his confeſſion, ſhould have a true compunction and ſincere contrition for ſins? How is it poſſible that he, who is generally indifferent, formal, and cold in his petitions, ſhould have a juſt ſenſe either of his wants or dangers; or a true value for the grace and favour of God? The ſum is, deadneſs in duty is either general or rare, common or accidental: if it befals us *commonly*, 'tis an argument of an unregenerate heart; if *rarely*, 'tis not. But if the returns of life and deadneſs in duty be ſo frequent and unconſtant, that 'tis impoſſible to determine whether the one or the other prevail moſt; then 'tis

plain, that the ſtate alſo of ſuch a man is very dubious.

2. Duty muſt never be deſtitute of *ſincerity*, tho' it may of *pleaſure* and tranſport; it muſt never be without *ſeriouſneſs* and concernment, tho' it may be very defective in the *degrees* of *love* and *ardency*. Thus in prayer, the tenderneſs and contrition of the ſoul, diſſolved in love and ſorrow, is a frame of ſpirit much above what the penitent commonly arrives at. But an averſion for ſin, a firm reſolution to forſake it, and a hearty deſire to be enabled by the grace of God ſo to do, is what he muſt not want. So again, joy and tranſport, the ardor and exultancy of mind, is the effect of a clear underſtanding, an aſſured conſcience, an heart inflamed with love, and a ſtrict life: whoever therefore falls ſhort in the one, will generally fall ſhort in the other too. But every Chriſtian, that is truly ſuch, muſt have a true ſenſe of his wants, a hearty deſire to pleaſe God, a true notion of his goodneſs, and a ſteddy dependence upon it through Chriſt. And theſe things are ſufficient to unite our hearts and our lips in the ſame petitions: to make us in earneſt, in all the duties we perform, and careful to intend the main end of them.

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3. The prayer of the *perfect* man is generally offered up with the *tendereſt* and moſt *exalted* paſſion; and a holy pleaſure mingles it ſelf in every part of his office: his petitions and praiſes; his confeſſions, deprecations and confidences, are all of them expreſſions of warm and delightful paſſions. And how can we well conceive it otherwiſe? Muſt not thoſe *praiſes* and *Magnificats* be full of joy and tranſport, which flow from a full aſſurance of the divine favour, from a long experience of his love, and from the glorious proſpect of a bleſſed eternity? Can thoſe *deprecations* and *confidences* want a heavenly calm and tranquillity of ſpirit, which reſt upon the Mediation of Jeſus, the promiſes of an immutable God, and the pledge of his Spirit? Can thoſe *confeſſions* want contrition, that have all the tenderneſs that holy zeal and the humbleſt reflections can inſpire them with? which are poured forth by a ſoul enlightened, purified, ſtrong in the faith, rooted and grounded in love; by a ſoul conſequently that has the livelieſt ſenſe of the deformity and danger of ſin, of the beauty and pleaſure of holineſs, of the infinite goodneſs of God, and of that love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge? Can, finally, thoſe *petitions* want deſire and flame,

which are offered up by a ſoul that hungers and thirſts after righteouſneſs, that counts all things but dung and droſs in compariſon of Jeſus, that pants after God, that longs to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt? And as we may thus, from the nature of things, collect what kind of prayers thoſe of the perfect man generally are; ſo may we, from the example of the royal *Pſalmiſt*, and others, demonſtrate all this to be no vain ſpeculation, but real matter of fact. 'Tis true, *weight* and *dignity* of *matter*, *gravity* and *ſignificancy* of *expreſſion*, are the character moſt conſpicuous in *publick* offices, in the beſt and moſt ancient prayers: and particularly in the Lord's prayer. We find in them few or no figures of ſpeech, no vehemence of expreſſion. But it is true too, that the devotion of a ſoul diſengaged, as it were, from the body, retired from the world, collected within it ſelf, raiſed by daily contemplation, and accuſtomed to converſe with heaven, flows naturally and eaſily. Thoſe great *ideas*, which ſuch a prayer as that of our Lord's compoſure preſent to the mind, inflame the deſire, awaken all the paſſions of the holy man, without any labour of imagination, or artifice of words.

Thus

Thus have I conſidered the nature of lukewarmneſs; and ſhewed how far the perfect man is removed from it. My next buſineſs is, to perſuade and exhort men to quit it; and become ſincere and zealous. Only I muſt, firſt, take notice by the way, that beſides idleneſs and lukewarmneſs, there is ſometimes a third cauſe or occaſion of unfruitfulneſs; which deſerves never to be ſlighted: that is, *fickleneſs*, *unſteadineſs*, or *inconſtancy*. Many there are, who often purpoſe, project, and reſolve great matters; but never bring forth any fruit to perfection: what they build one day, they throw down another. They put on as many various moral forms, as *Proteus* in the poets does natural ones: ſometimes they are in a fit of zeal; at other times nothing but coldneſs and bare form: ſometimes they are in the camp of virtue; ſometimes in that of vice. In a word, they halt, like the *Iſraelites*, between *God* and *Baal*; and are divided and diſtracted between a *ſenſe* of *duty*, and the *love* of the *world* and the *body*; between the *checks* and incitements of *conſcience* on the one hand, and ſome fooliſh *inclinations* on the other. This ſtate I have had an eye to very often, nor ſhall I forget it here; but ſhall propoſe ſuch a method for the cure of lukewarmneſs and formality, as may be alſo of very good uſe to all ſuch, as

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fall ſhort of the main end of religion; being not truly and thoroughly changed; but are only *almoſt perſuaded to be Chriſtians*: and only not altogether *ſo far from the kingdom of heaven* as others. This being premiſed, I proceed, and,

1. I will inquire into the cauſes from whence lukewarmneſs, and all abortive attempts after virtue, flow.

2. I will ſhew the *folly*, *guilt*, and *danger* of a *Laodicean* ſtate.

§. 1. Of the cauſes, *&c.* Theſe are generally four.

1. Men finding themſelves under great difficulties in coming up to holineſs, in the true genuine and goſpel-notion of it, have endeavoured to enlarge the way, and widen the gate that leads to life; and have therefore formed to themſelves more ſoft and pliant notions of vice and virtue: ſuch as may be more eaſily accommodated, either to their particular *inclinations*, or to the *modes* and *faſhions* of the world, than thoſe of Chriſt and the apoſtles can. Hence it is, that amongſt ſuch as pretend to ſome regard for religion, humility, poverty of ſpirit, ſelf-denial, abſtinence and mortification, are ſo far from being viſible in their practice, that we ſeem

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to have almoſt loſt the notion of them. And the pride of life, and the luſt of the eyes, are ſo univerſally practiſed, that tho' we know, that theſe in St. *John* are the names of vices, we ſcarce know what the things themſelves are. We have confounded the mears and bounds of vice and virtue; and ſuch are the freedoms, I will not ſay of thoſe who profeſs debauchery, but Chriſtianity, that if they be conſiſtent with the ſanctity and purity of the goſpel, 'twill be hard to determine what exceſs is. And, in a word, how many are there, who, making a profeſſion of living by faith, and looking for the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearance of Chriſt, do yet live, as if all the buſineſs of life were to get and enjoy as much of this world as they can; who, profeſſing themſelves the diſciples of Chriſt, whoſe heart was lowly, his fortune mean, and his appearance humble, do yet lay out their time, their labour, their wealth on this one deſign, to make ſuch a ſhew, ſuch a figure in the world, as may render them the gaze and envy of their neighbours? And, as our indulgence to our ſelves in theſe things, which relate to the pride and vanity of life, and the eaſe and appetites of the body, is very great; ſo on the ſame ground, and for the ſame reaſon, is our *zeal* for the intereſt

tereſt of virtue, and the honour of God, very little, faint, and remiſs. Converſation has very little ſavour, very little grace in it; and we are ſo far from being reſolute and induſtrious to awe or ſhame vice abroad, that we our ſelves ſhould be almoſt out of countenance, if we ſhould be obſerved to pay any particular reſpect to religion or virtue in company. The government of our families is ſo lax and eaſy, that it ſavours more of coldneſs and indifferency, than fervency of ſpirit. 'Tis true indeed, theſe I am ſpeaking of do generally frequent the houſe of God; *and they ſit before him as his people; and delight to hear his word:* But ſo did the *Jews*, when God tells them, in the prophet *Ezek.* xxxiii. 31. *that their hearts went after their covetouſneſs:* And in the prophet *Iſaiah*, we have but an odd character of the morals of theſe people; of whom God ſaith, *Yet they ſeek me daily, and delight to know my ways:* Nay, further, *they delight in approaching to God*, Iſa. lviii. 2. Now though ſuch, as I am ſpeaking of, may not be guilty to this degree, ſo as to be chargeable with open wickedneſs; yet I am very much afraid, that even in this duty they but promote the cheat and impoſture they put upon themſelves; and make their diligence in this point miniſter to quiet their conſciences in their *Laodi-*

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cean ſtate; for 'twere eaſy to prove, that ſuch as theſe do more generally aim at the entertainment of the ear, than the reformation of the heart. And we may ſay of preachers now, as God did of *Ezekiel*; *And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely ſong, of one that has a very pleaſant voice*, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. The muſick of the voice; the gracefulneſs of delivery; a flow of words; the ſurprize of novelty, and notion; the beauty of ſentences; and the ſparkling of wit and fancy, or an appearance of learning: theſe are, I doubt, too often the things that draw together and charm an auditory: and ſo all are pleaſed, but none converted or edified; for who ſweats or bluſhes, who trembles or grows pale at theſe ſermons? Who goes away from them wounded or ſtruck through, ſerious and penſive, full of pious fears and devout deſires?

2. A *Laodicean* ſtate ſprings from ſloth and puſillanimity, or the want of a thorough and well-grounded reſolution. This was one cauſe of the *Iſraelites* fluctuation and uncertainty; they were indeed deſirous of a *Canaan*, but were not forward to purchaſe it, by tedious marches, hazardous encounters, and the hardſhip of hunger and thirſt, and ſuch like: they were ever and anon willing to have preferred

ferred the diſhonour and ſervitude of *Egypt*, with ſecurity and fulneſs, before a *Canaan* on theſe terms. And thus it is, this day, with Chriſtians of a *Laodicean* ſpirit, and a doubtful ſtaggering allegiance. An heaven they would have, but would not purchaſe it at too dear a rate; they would be accounted the diſciples of Chriſt, and ſhare in the merits of his ſufferings, but they would not take up his croſs, in any ſenſe, and follow him. But, alas! *Iſrael* might as well have gained their liberty, without going out of *Egypt*; or a *Canaan*, without travel, and hardſhip, and blood; as theſe, virtue, and heaven, without watchfulneſs and induſtry: we may as well hope to ſupport and encreaſe the health and ſtrength of the body, without food or exerciſe; as that of the ſoul, without meditation and prayer: we may as ſoon conquer our enemies without diſcipline, expence, and blows; as maſter our corruptions, and become virtuous, without ſpiritual watchfulneſs, travel, or contention. There is indeed force and efficacy enough in the word of God, to enlighten the mind, and purify the heart; if we would but frequently and ſeriouſly read and meditate it. The grace of the Spirit is ſufficient to conquer our corruptions, and ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh us in faith and obedience, if we did but earneſtly

earneſtly and frequently pray for it; and cheriſh and improve it, when obtained. The means which God has preſcribed are undoubtedly proper and ſuitable, powerful and effectual, to the attainment, preſervation, and increaſe of holineſs; and all his ordinances have a divine virtue and energy in them, if they be but duly and conſcientiouſly made uſe of. But if we do not watch; if we do not meditate; if we do not pray; if we expoſe our ſelves to a vain and trifling converſation; if we indulge the body in all the eaſe it is inclined to, and put our ſelves upon no duties, practiſe no diſcipline that we have any reluctancy for; 'tis not to be wondered at, if our virtue be crazy and ſickly, if our performances be cold and unedifying, our faith weak, our affections low and groveling, our life unſteddy and unprofitable, our religion deſtitute of true pleaſure, and our latter end of any rational comfort, or well-grounded confidence. 'Tis naturally to be expected that the ſoul of the ſluggard ſhould be like his field. *Prov.* xxiv. 30. *I went by the field of the ſlothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of underſtanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the ſtone wall thereof was broken down:* This is one plain cauſe, and commonly the firſt, of our halt-

halting between *God* and *Baal*; namely, our idleneſs and ſloth in religion, joined with puſillanimity and cowardiſe, which moves us to decline all difficulties, and diſables us to make a bold reſiſtance againſt temptations: how criminal and guilty this muſt render us in the ſight of God, 'tis no difficulty to gueſs. Is this the zeal, the revenge of an humble and active penitent? Is this to redeem the time, and efface the memory of our paſt ſins and provocations? Is this the converſation, that becomes the children of the light, and of the day? Is this our hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs? Is this our ambition, our paſſion for an heaven? Finally, Is it thus we requite the mercies and obligations of God, and the love of Jeſus, that paſſeth knowledge? Shall ſuch halting trimming Chriſtians as theſe, think ye, ever be judged endued with a true and living faith, who expreſs in the whole tenour of their lives, ſo much coldneſs and indifference for their ſalvation, which the Son of God thought worth the purchaſing, by ſo much travel and ſo much ſorrow, ſo much ſhame and ſo much blood?

3. A third cauſe of our halting between *God* and *Baal* is ſome degrees of infidelity. This was the caſe of *Iſrael* too. They

they were ever prone to idolatry; partly trained up to it in *Egypt*, and elſewhere; partly being more capable of forming an *idea* of a finite and topical God, than of an infinite and univerſal one, *Jer.* xxiii. 23. partly being fond of following the faſhions of other nations. And, laſtly, moved, partly by that great and long proſperity, which *Egypt* and other idolatrous nations enjoyed; and no doubt, comparing it too with the variety and uncertainty of their own fortune, and the frequent diſappointment of their expectations, *Hoſea* ii. never laying it to heart all the while; that the way to ſecure their proſperity, was to change, not their God, but their manners. I would to God, this were not too lively a deſcription of the ſtate of too many Chriſtians; and that we could not trace our lukewarmneſs and fickleneſs in religion, too plainly back to the ſame ſource or origin; namely, ſome degrees of infidelity. I wiſh the proſperity of the wicked do not ſomewhat undermine the belief of a providence: I wiſh, whatever we talk of a treaſure in another world, we do not now and then think it wiſeſt to have our portion in this. I am afraid, that the decays and diſſolutions of our nature in death, the rottenneſs and corruption of the grave, and the variety of changes and fortunes our very duſt undergoes,

may tempt us to ſome ſcruples and jealouſies about a poſthumous life. But however it be in theſe points, I am too too well aſſured, that we do often doubt, whether virtue be the true bleſſedneſs of life; whether there be that pleaſure in righteouſneſs the ſcripture affirms there is. I am confident, the notions of righteouſneſs and holineſs, with which the ſcripture furniſhes us, are often blurred and blotted by the maxims and cuſtoms of the world; and perſwade myſelf, that there is ſcarcely one of thoſe, that are *Laodiceans* and trimmers in religion, that do not flatter themſelves, that God will not be as ſevere as his threats; and that he will receive them into heaven upon milder and ſofter terms than the goſpel propoſes. Some ſuch kind of infidelity as this muſt poſſeſs the heart, where-ever the life is ſo infinitely below our profeſſion. When *the word preached doth not profit*, it is becauſe it is not *mingled* with a due meaſure of *faith in thoſe that hear it.* If we did truly believe the revelations of God; if we did ſee the promiſes of God as evident and preſent by faith, though diſtant in themſelves, 'twere impoſſible but they muſt move, but they muſt take us; 'twere impoſſible but they muſt enkindle in us another ſort of deſire, and this deſire would ſoon produce another ſort of endeavours,

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another ſort of life. When *Moſes* beheld *Canaan* from *Piſga*, how paſſionately did he deſire to enter into *that* good land! When the diſciples had ſeen Jeſus aſcend up into heaven, how were they tranſported with a deſire of following him! how unſpeakable was their joy! how fervent their prayers! how laſting and enlarged their gratitude! *They returned to* Jeruſalem *with great joy; and were continually in the temple praiſing and bleſſing God.* How does a proſpect of gain captivate the covetous! How does the fancy or expectation of pleaſure inflame the voluptuary! How does the ſight of vanity and grandeur infect the proud! And the hope of glory fire the ambitious? What, hath the beauty and pleaſure of holineſs no attraction? Has heaven no charms in it? Has the favour and love of God, and of Jeſus, no force, no power in them? Surely we have not the face to deny, but that the promiſes of God are great and precious ones; and if they raiſe no paſſion in us, it muſt not be through want of *excellence* and *lovelineſs* in *them*, but want of *faith* in *us*. And then judge you, how acceptable this kind of infidelity muſt render us to God; what value can God have for a people whom no kindneſs can oblige, no arguments convince; with whom no miracles can gain belief; no aſſurances or

promiſes find credit? Hell is the portion of the *fearful* and *unbeliever*, Rev. xxi. 8. And what dreadful judgments did overwhelm *Iſrael*, as often as they thus halted between God and idols! it did not excuſe them that they had ſome ſort of *veneration* for the memory of *Moſes* and his *miracles*; ſincé this was not able to over-rule their *prejudice* and *ſuperſtition*; that they retain ſome honour for *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, and that *God* which was the *fear* of their *fathers*, ſince they had as much, or more, for the *nations* round about them, and their *gods* too. And whatever power they did acknowledge in the God of heaven, or whatever benefit they did own themſelves to have derived from him, as I can hardly think the memory of either was utterly extinguiſhed amongſt them; all this availed them nothing, while they made their court to other gods too, and put their truſt in their patronage and protection. Though this be ſufficient to make us ſenſible of the guilt of a *Laodicean* virtue and an uncertain halting faith; yet I muſt advance on, and obſerve unto you a worſe principle, if worſe can be, of this deportment yet, which is,

4. The fourth fountain of this unſteadineſs and remiſneſs in religion is, ſome remains of corruption; the prevalency

lency of ſome vicious paſſion or other. Mens actions are the plaineſt indications of their affections. If the life looks two ways, we need not doubt but that the heart does ſo too. This was that made the young man in the goſpel fluctuate ſo between *Chriſt* and *mammon*; this was the caſe of *Herod*; he had yielded, no doubt, to the power and force of the *Baptiſt's reaſons*, if he had not been drawn back by the charms of his *Herodias*. And this is the caſe of every man who is but *almoſt* a Chriſtian; he is under the aſcendant of ſome ſilly or vile luſt or other; this is that which ſpoils the taſte of the hidden *manna*, and diminiſheth the price of *Canaan*. Without doubt men would apply themſelves more vigorouſly to ſpiritual things, were they not too fond of the body and the pleaſures of it; they would certainly ſeek the kingdom of heaven more earneſtly, and make a better proviſion than they do for the other world, were they not too much taken with this, and therefore too apt to ſet up their reſt on this ſide *Jordan*. Now if this be ſo, what can we expect? They only who *conquer*, are *crowned*; they that *ſow* to the *fleſh* and to the *world*, can reap nothing from theſe but *corruption*. Theſe kind of Chriſtians, though peradventure they are not ſlaves to any *infamous* and *ſcandalous* luſts, are yet entangled by

ſome other, not much leſs injurious, though not to *reputation*, yet to *purity of heart*; they are captivated to the world and fleſh, though their chains ſeem better poliſhed, and of a finer metal; they cannot mount upwards, they cannot conquer, being retarded and kept under, if not by the *ſtrength* of *temptation*, yet by their own *ſoftneſs* and *weakneſs*; and yet, why ſhould I doubt but theſe are conquered by temptation? The more *innocent* the object of any one's paſſion is, generally the more *fatal*, becauſe we are the more apt to *indulge* our ſelves in it. The cauſes of Lukewarmneſs being thus pointed out, 'tis evident what the cure of it conſiſts in, namely, in forming juſt and correct notions of virtue and vice; in ſtrengthening and confirming our faith, and in perfecting and compleating our reformation. I will now endeavour to poſſeſs the minds of men with an averſion and dread of this ſtate of Lukewarmneſs, by ſhewing,

1. The folly.
2. The guilt; and,
3. The danger of it.

1. The folly. How reaſonably may I here addreſs myſelf to the lukewarm in the words of *Elijah* to the *Iſraelites*: *How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be*

be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him, 1 Kings xviii. 21. If you do indeed believe, that your ſafety and happineſs depends upon God, then ſerve him in good earneſt; but if you think this depends upon the world, the fleſh, and the devil, then ſerve theſe; if you really think that virtue and religion are the moſt ſolid and ſtable treaſure, then ſtrive ſincerely and vigorouſly to poſſeſs your ſelves of them; but if you really think, that the eaſe and pleaſure of the body, reſpect, and pomp, and ſtate, is the proper portion and ſoveraign good of man, then devote and offer up your ſelves to theſe. For what a folly is that life, which will neither procure us the happineſs of this world, nor of another? To what purpoſe is it to liſten only ſo much to conſcience, as to damp and chill our pleaſure; and ſo much to pleaſure, as to diſturb the peace and repoſe of conſcience? But indeed, as the words of *Elijah* were rather an *irony* than any real doubt, whether *Baal* or the Lord were God; rather a ſcornful deriſion of their folly and ſtupidity, than a ſerious exhortation to deliberate, whether idolatry or the worſhip of the true God were to be choſen: I doubt not, but mine will ſeem to you to carry no other ſound in them. The diſparity is ſo vaſt between God and the world, between religion and ſenſuality, covetouſ-

neſs and ambition; between thoſe hopes and enjoyments we may reap from the one, and thoſe we can fancy in the other; that there is no place for doubting what choice we are to make, or to which ſide we are to adhere; nay, in this we are more criminal than the *Iſraelites*, being ſelf-condemned. The *Iſraelites* indeed, ſeem to be at a loſs, whether the Lord or *Baal* were God; they doubted under whoſe protection they might thrive beſt. But at this day, whoever believes a God, knows very well there is none beſides him. Whatever paſſion we have for the world, and the things of it; whatever ſpiritual idolatry we are guilty of, our opinions are not yet ſo far corrupted, as to attribute to them, in reality, any thing like Divinity. Whilſt we dote on wealth, we at the ſame time know that it makes it ſelf wings and flies away; whilſt on greatneſs and power, we know that 'tis but a piece of empty and toilſome pageantry. and often the ſubject of miſery and diſmal tragedies, not incident to a lower ſtate; whilſt we dote on pleaſure, we are well aſſured that 'tis diſhonourable and ſhort, and intermixed with fears, and ſhame, and torment; we know that nothing here below is able to free our ſtate and fortune from calamity, our mind from guilt, the body from death, much leſs the whole man from a miſerable

miſerable eternity. In one word, we know that what we admire is vanity, and what we worſhip is indeed an idol. This being ſo, I will inſiſt no longer on this topick; for ſince the world bears no competition with God in our opinion, tho' it often rivals him in our affections, we are not to impute the halting of a *Laodicean* Chriſtian to any perſuaſion of omnipotence or all-ſufficiency, or any thing like Divinity in the things he dotes on, ſerves, and worſhips; but we muſt find out ſome other reaſon of it. And that is generally this: we are willing to believe, that our fondneſs for the world, and our indulgence to the body, is conſiſtent enough with religion; that it is no violation of our faith, nor provocation to God; nor conſequently, prejudice to our eternal intereſt; and then 'tis no wonder if we blend and compound religion and ſenſuality; and ſtand divided in our affections; and conſequently halt in our ſervice between God and the world. To prevent this, I will ſhew,

2. That this is a great *ſin*; which is ſufficiently evident from this ſingle conſideration, that it fruſtrates the efficacy of the goſpel and the Spirit, and entirely defeats the great deſign of the Chriſtian religion. For, 1. Religion has no effectual influence upon the lukewarm himſelf; the goſpel

goſpel works no thorough change in him. The ſinner is not converted into a ſaint; nor human nature perfected by participation of a divine one. 2. The *Laodiceans* can never offer up to God any gift, any ſacrifice worthy of him; nor render him any ſervice acceptable to him; the *kingdom of God is righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghoſt*, Rom. xiv. *He that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* But alas! theſe men are almoſt utter ſtrangers to theſe things; a few faint and irreſolute wiſhes, formal and cuſtomary prayers, niggardly and grumbling alms, and an attendance upon God's word, rather out of ſpiritual wantonneſs, than devotion; theſe are the offerings they can make God; and will God be better pleaſed with theſe, than he was with thoſe of *Iſrael*, that were deformed with maims and blemiſhes? *Mal.* i. 8. *Offer now theſe to thy governour; will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept of thy perſon? ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* The *Magi*, indeed, left their country, and offered *gold, frankincenſe and myrrh to our Saviour*, Mat. ii. *David* would *not ſacrifice to God of that which coſt him nothing*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. The primitive Chriſtians offered up to God prayers and tears, labours and travels; nay, their honours, their fortunes, their lives, their blood. But, alas! what have theſe

these men to offer? They have not love enough to put them upon any expence; nor faith enough to put them upon any hardships, for the sake of God and virtue. *For tho' they think themselves rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, yet* are they poor, wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, *Rev.* iii. 17. And shall these receive a crown of righteousness? Shall these share in the kingdom of Jesus? Shall these partake in the triumph of the last day? It can never be; they do nothing worthy of the gospel, nothing worthy of the Spirit of God; nothing that can entitle them to the benefit of the Cross of Christ.

3. The life of the *Laodicean* Christian will never do any credit to religion, or reflect any honour on the gospel. No man will be ever able to discern the beauty of holiness, or the power and efficacy of divine truths, from the practice and conversation of such an one. Ah! had the carriage of the primitive times been such as his, I know not what *miracles* might have done, I am sure *examples* would never have made any proselytes. But the Christians then acted those virtues, which the *Pagan* only pretended to; and faith in Jesus atchieved those victories over the world, which the *Jews* (so debauched and stupid

were

were they grown) did in the declenſion of that ſtate neither underſtand nor pretend to: this was that which made the world admire and love Chriſtianity. After thus much ſaid of the effects of this ſort of carriage; I need ſcarcely put any one in mind, what will be the laſt and ſaddeſt effect of it; for if our Chriſtianity be ſuch, that it neither truly ſets us free from our bondage to the world and fleſh; nor inriches our ſoul with true and ſolid virtues; if it neither promote the honour of God, nor the good of man, it muſt unavoidably follow, that having no true title to God's favour, nor any rational ground, on which to build an aſſurance of it, we can reap no true comfort or pleaſure from religion here, or any reward from it hereafter. Alas! what talk I of comfort and reward? *Diſtreſs and anguiſh muſt take hold of the ſinners in Sion; and fearfulneſs muſt ſurpriſe the hypocrite:* and from the troubles and miſeries of *this* life, they muſt go down into the everlaſting torments of *another*. The ſcripture is plain; God will ſpue them out of his mouth, as he did the *Laodicean:* he will ſhut the *gate* of *heaven* againſt them, as againſt the *fooliſh virgins* that had no *oil* in their *lamps:* and their hell will have one torment in it, which is incident to no others, that they had once the hopes of heaven; and it is no ſmall

aggra-

aggravation of miſery to fall into it, even from the expectation of happineſs.

This is not, as I obſerved above, to be applied to accidental dulneſs or deadneſs in duty; nor are the decays or abatements of love, which good men ſometimes ſuffer, immediately to be pronounced damnable. But yet *theſe* are to be put in mind of the danger they are in; and recalled to their former zeal, in the words of the Spirit to the Church of *Epheſus*; *Nevertheleſs, I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the firſt works; or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent*, Rev. ii. 4, 5.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of Zeal. *What in general is meant by* Zeal; *and what is that perfection of holiness in which it consists. Whether the perfect man must be adorned with a confluence of all virtues; and to what degree of holiness he may be supposed to arrive.*

I Am arrived at the *last stage* of *perfection*, which I chuse to call a state of *zeal*; not only because the *scripture* seems to direct me to this expression, but also because it seems to me more full and proper than others, that *may* be, or *are* made use of for the same end. A state of *love* is an expression that better suits *another* life than *this*. For the lesson the *perfect* man is ever and anon to revolve in his mind, is, that the present life is a life of labour, and travel, and sufferings; the future one, of rewards, and crowns, and enjoyments. Then as to that other expression, the state of *love*, it suits my purpose well enough; but does not come up so justly and exactly to it, as the state of *zeal*; for I take *zeal* to be *love*, in the utmost elevation and vivacity that it is capable of.

And now, what a noble, what a fruitful *argument* am I entring upon? Methinks I feel my soul grow *warm*, and *in-*

kindle

kindle upon my approaching it; and my first views or contemplations of it inspire me with desires of the same nature with it self. I am concerned to see my self confined and limited by the laws of *method*; and find my self inclined to wish, that I were now to write, rather a just *volume*, than a few *pages*. Here the heroic *acts*, or, what is more, the heroic *lives* of saints, martyrs, and confessors, present themselves to my thoughts; here *human* nature, enriched, adorned, and elevated to the utmost degree, by a participation of the *divine* one; here the power of *God's Word*, the energy of the *Holy Ghost*, the triumphs of *faith*, and the extasies of *love*, would be described; here the different excellencies of different *virtues*, and the different value of *good works*, should be stated and settled, and the various paths, in which men pursue the *heights* of virtue and the noblest designs be examined, and solid piety and true wisdom be refined from the alloys and mixtures of enthusiasm, superstition, fancy, or whatever else they are disfigured and debased by. But this cannot *now* be done, and it may be it could not at all be done by *me:* no measure of the *Spirit*, peradventure, below that with which the *apostles* were inspired, is sufficient to treat this argument as it requires. Besides, according

cording to my capacity, I have been all along making this point. When, in the *firſt* ſection, I ſtated the *notion* of *perfection*, ſhewed by what ſteps we advanced to it, what *means* we are to make uſe of, and what would be the *fruit* of it, I did in effect deſcribe to my reader, the ſtate of *zeal*, and marked out the path that leads to it. When, in the *ſecond*, I labour to eſtabliſh the true *liberty* of man, upon the overthrow and extirpation not only of *mortal ſin*, and of *idleneſs* and *lukewarmneſs*, but alſo, as far as it might be, even of *ſin of infirmity*, and *original corruption*; what elſe was I doing, but proſecuting this one deſign, namely, the implanting and propagating in the world the ſtate of *zeal*? However, ſomething there ſeems to me yet wanting to *compleat* my undertaking; and that I am to endeavour now. To which end I will here diſcourſe of three things,

1. What it is in general I mean by *zeal*.
2. What is that *Perfection* of *holineſs* or *righteouſneſs*, wherein it conſiſts And,
3. Of the *efficacy* or *force* of this *holineſs*, as it exerts it ſelf in *good works*. Of theſe, the *two former* ſhall be the argument of *this*; the *third* of the *following* chapter.

§. 1. Of

§. 1. Of *zeal* in *general*, what it is. I do not exclude ſome degrees of *zeal*, from every period of the Chriſtian's life; ſincerity cannot ſubſiſt wholly without it. *The hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, which is the ſubject of one of our Saviour's *Beatitudes*, muſt be more or leſs in every child of God. But it may ſignify one thing in the *infant*, another in the *adult* Chriſtian; in the one, the conqueſt of ſin, or rather of the reliques and remains of former ſinful habits, and the attainment of habitual goodneſs, is the *object* of this *hunger and thirſt*: in the other, it imports a vehement deſire of whatever is yet wanting to a farther accompliſhment and conſummation of righteouſneſs *already* fixed and eſtabliſhed; the entire and ultimate perfection of it in *heaven*; and in the *mean* time, the promoting the divine glory upon *earth*, whatever it coſt him to do ſo. By a ſtate of *zeal* then, I here mean virtue or holineſs, not in the bud, or in the bloſſom, but in its full ſtrength and ſtature, grown up, and ripe, and loaded with bleſſed fruits: I mean *that* holineſs that is the reſult of illumination, or clearneſs of judgment, of the ſtrength and force of holy reſolution, and the vigour and energy of holy paſſions. In a word, I mean that ſolid, ſpiritual, and operative

religion, which may be felt and enjoyed by us our ſelves, in the ſerenity and tranquillity of conſcience, the longings and breathings of pious deſires, the joys and pleaſures of a rational aſſurance; diſcerned by the world in our lives and actions, in the modeſty of our garb, in the plainneſs and humility of all things elſe that pertain to the *port* of life; in the temperance of our meals, the purity and heavenlineſs of converſation, the moderation of our deſigns and enjoyments, the inſtruction of our families, with a tender and indefatigable watchfulneſs over them; the conſtancy of our attendance *upon*, and the devoutneſs of our deportment *in*, the publick worſhip of God; and finally, in the activity and generoſity of our charity: or, to ſpeak my thoughts in the language of St. *Paul*, a ſtate of *zeal*, is that perfection or maturity of holineſs, which abounds in *the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope, in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in the ſight of God, and our Father*, 1 *Theſſ.* i. 3. Now the end of all this is, the advancing the glory of God: and therefore *zeal* is well enough deſcribed or defined, by an ardent or vehement deſire of doing ſo. Now this is advanced two ways: *firſt*, by our *perſonal* and *inherent holineſs*: and, *ſecondly*, by the fruit of it,

it, *good works*. Of both which I will now ſpeak a little more particularly.

§. 2. Of that *perfection* of *holineſs* which conſtitutes the ſtate of *zeal*. Here I will inquire into *two* things.

1. Whether the *perfect* man muſt be poſſeſſed of *all* the treaſures of goodneſs; whether he muſt be adorned by a confluence, and an accumulation of *all* virtues.

2. What *height* of virtue, what *degree* of holineſs, he may be ſuppoſed to arrive at.

1. Of the *extent* of righteouſneſs. It is generally thought, that univerſality is as eſſential and neceſſary a property of goſpel-righteouſneſs, as ſincerity and perſeverance: that there is an inſeparable connexion and union, between *all* Chriſtian virtues; ſo that he, who wants *any*, muſt be concluded to have *none*: this *want* being, not like a blemiſh that diminiſhes the beauty, or a maim that weakens the ſtrength; but like a wound that diſſolves the frame and contexture of the natural body. This opinion is partly built upon *reaſon*, which tells us, that there is a native luſtre and beauty in all virtues; and therefore there is no one in the whole ſyſ-

tem of morality, but must be lovely and amiable to a good mar. Partly upon *scripture*, in which we find the Christian represented, *as holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 15. *Perfect in every good work*, Heb. xiii. 21. *As filled with all the fulness of God*, Eph. iii. 19. *As fruitful in every good work*, Col. i. 10. and exhorted in the most comprehensive terms imaginable, to the practice of *every* virtue. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.* To which may be added numerous texts, importing, that faith is a principle of *universal* righteousness; and that the fear and love of God, do equally oblige us to *all* his commandments; and that the violation of *one* involves us in the guilt of *all.* And the result of all this seems to be plainly this, that the whole *chain* of graces is dissolved and lost, if there be but one *link* wanting. But at this rate, as the *sincere* man must be endowed with *all* manner of virtues, so must the *perfect excel* in *all:* but the one and the other assertion, if we consider things closely, seems to have in them insuperable difficulties. There is a vast *variety* in the natures of men, in the states

and

and conditions of life, and in the kinds and degrees, as well as of the ſanctifying as of the miraculous gifts of God. St *Paul* tells us, *every man has his proper gift of God*, 1 Cor. vii. 7. From whence it ſeems naturally to be inferred, that every man is not capable of attaining to an excellence and eminence in *every* virtue. Experience tells us, that there are different kinds of *natures*, as well as *ſoils*; and that ſome kinds of *virtues*, like ſome kinds of *ſeed*, will thrive better in *one* than in *another*. Nor does *grace* alter the matter much; ſince it generally accommodates it ſelf to *nature*. Laſtly, it ſeems very hard, that every man ſhould have the virtues of all men, of all ſtates, of all capacities; every particular member, the virtues of the whole Church; the beauty and ſtrength of the Church, as well as of the natural body, or common-wealth, conſiſting, not in the all-ſufficiency of every member, but in that variety of gifts and graces, that cements and unites, enriches and ſupports the whole. To come to the matter of *fact*; I read of the *faith* of *Abraham*, the *meekneſs* of *Moſes*, the *patience* of *Job*, the *love* of *Mary Magdalen*, the *zeal* of St. *Peter*, and the *labours* and *travels* of St. *Paul*; which firmneſs and conſtancy is too mean a name for. Theſe virtues ſeem therefore, to have been the *peculiar* excellencies of theſe

perſons; and to have ſhone in *them* with more tranſcendent luſtre, than any *other*: theſe ſeem to have been the virtues, for which grace and nature eminently qualified them; and to which the providence of God more immediately and directly called them. All this conſidered, ſeems it not enough to come up to the *perfection* of *theſe* great men? May it not ſuffice to excel in theſe virtues, which nature, grace, and providence preſcribed? May not the *perfect* be allowed to want, what he does not need? Would not one think, that, in many reſpects, it were enough for him to be free from this or that vice, rather than to expect that he ſhould be adorned with this or that virtue, which he has no uſe for? Eſpecially, if by virtue we underſtand ſtrictly, ſuch a habit as enables us to act eaſily and delightfully. To adjuſt this matter;

1. The *perfect* man muſt, as I have proved before, not only be ſet free from the dominion of ſin, but alſo abſtain even from a ſingle act of preſumptuous wickedneſs: he muſt neither criminally *omit* a duty, nor deliberately *commit* any thing repugnant to it.

2*dly*, He muſt be endowed with ſpiritual wiſdom and underſtanding, with faith, hope, charity, with the graces which I will call

call *universal*, because necessary and indispensable to all as Christians, abstracting from their particular capacities and relations; and *that* too in an *eminent* degree, so as to be *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. This will render him *holy in all manner of conversation, and thoroughly furnished to all good works.* These two things constitute *universal* righteousness, compleat the *perfect* man, and fully satisfy the texts alledged; or, if *not*, what follows *will.*

3*dly*, He must excel in those virtues which are most *natural.* I call those virtues *natural*, to which grace and nature most powerfully dispose and incline him; for *these* he seems to be designed by God; these will soon grow up to maturity; and much will be their fruit, and great their beauty. I do not all this while suppose, that the *perfect* man ought not so far to subdue and rectify his temper, as not only to overcome the sin of his *constitution*, but in some degrees possess the virtue that is most repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent *here*, is, I doubt, too hard and unreasonable. For *here*, when he has bestowed much pains and travel, much care and cost, his progress may not be so much, as where he bestowed *least.* But here I must add *two* cautions; the *one* is, that

no man miſtake contracted *habits* for *nature*, and then conclude, that it will be impoſſible for him to attain the *perfection* of this or that virtue, through a natural incapacity. In the next place, let no man ſatisfy and content himſelf, in a weak and imperfect ſtate of *that* virtue, which is directly oppoſed to the ſin of his *conſtitution*; but let him think, that *here*, if any where, his virtue muſt be always *growing*; and let him not doubt, but that our Saviour's promiſe, as far as it can be accompliſhed on earth, belongs to his ſincere endeavours here; *bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs; for they ſhall be filled*, Matth. v. 6.

4. The *perfect* man muſt be eminent in thoſe virtues which are moſt *neceſſary*: ſuch are thoſe which his particular ſtation and calling, or any other diſpenſation of providence he is under, requires of him. Whatever virtues may be more *delightful*, theſe are more *important*; others may be more *natural*, theſe have more of *uſe* and more of *merit*. A man may fall ſhort of *perfection* in others, without either *diſparagement* or *guilt*; but deficiency in theſe, can hardly eſcape *both*. Beſides, every thing is lovely in its *place*, and in its *time*. There is a *peculiar* grace and luſtre, that attends the virtues of a man's *ſtation*, that

is

is ſcarcely to be found in any other. I would, therefore, have my *perfect* man truly great in his *own* buſineſs; and ſhine with a dazling luſtre in his *own* ſphere. To this purpoſe, ſurely, ſpeaks the advice of St. *Paul*, Rom xii. 6, 7, 8. *Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of faith: or miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtring: or he that teacheth, on teaching: or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with ſimplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence: he that ſheweth mercy, with chearfulneſs.*

5. Laſtly, As there is different *guilt* in ſins, ſo there is different *merit* in virtues: as amongſt miraculous, ſo amongſt ſanctifying gifts, ſome are more *excellent* than others; and he is the *moſt perfect man*, who is enriched with the *moſt perfect gifts*. The three heroic virtues of the goſpel are *faith*, *love*, *humility*. Nor do I preſumptuouſly, contrary to the apoſtle, exclude *hope*; but comprehend it under *faith*. Of *faith* I have often had occaſion to ſpeak. *Humility* will make the *laſt* chapter of *this* ſection; and therefore I will only exhort to *love*. *Love* is the nobleſt fruit of illumination and faith, the true ſource and parent of joy and peace,

peace. *Love* is the moſt pregnant ſeed of a divine life; 'tis the principle that animates, moves, and forms the whole body of righteouſneſs: *love* is the bond of union and *communion with the Father and his Son Jeſus* through the *Spirit*. And 'tis but fit, that what renders us moſt *like* God, ſhould render us moſt *dear* to him too: and this *love* does; *for God is love*. In ſhort, *love is the fulfilling of the law*; 'tis the beauty and perfection of a diſciple of Jeſus; and the great ſubject of praiſe and glory in the day of judgment. *Love* is the laſt round in the ſcale of *Perfection*; and therefore my *perfect* man muſt abound in this. What degrees of *love*, of *deſire*, or *complacency* for the things of this *preſent* life, may conſiſt with ſincerity, what with *Perfection*, may be eaſily learned from ſeveral parts of this work. There is no doubt but the *perfect* man muſt *love God* to that *degree*, that he muſt always cleave to him; walk as always before him; ever meditate and contemplate on him and his works; contrive and ſtudy, labour and contend to pleaſe him: it muſt be an affliction to him to be divided from him but for a little while; and he muſt ever and anon, by day and night, break out into his praiſes, and rejoyce and glory in him. 2. He muſt love

love God to that degree, as that all things, in comparison of him, must appear blasted and withered, empty and contemptible, without pleasure, without beauty: and consequently he must so thirst after the *beatific vision*, after the presence and fruition of God, that he must earnestly *desire to be dissolved*, and pant and long to be dismissed from the *pilgrimage* of this *world*, and from the corruptible *tabernacle* of the *body*. Nor do I, lastly, doubt, but that this *love* is often sensibly *transporting*: 'tis a fire within, that strives to break out, and exert itself in the fruitions of heaven: 'tis a rich and mighty cordial, that raises nature above itself, and makes it all purity or glory.

Thus have I considered the *extent* or compass of the *perfect* man's *virtues*. And the *sum total* is: in some he must excel, because natural and easy; in others, because necessary. Universal ones he *cannot* want; they are essential to Christianity; others of a peculiar nature he *may*, unless his circumstances exact them: nor is this any diminution of his *perfection*. Patience, fortitude, moderation, vigilance, &c. are the virtues of earth, not heaven; and yet none think the blessed inhabitants of that place imperfect, because not endowed with habits which they do not want.

Above

Above all, he that will be *perfect*, muſt abound in thoſe graces, which are for the moſt *heroic* nature; faith, love, and humility: for theſe are they, which moſt effectually exalt man above *himſelf*, and above the *world*; which inflame him with a *zeal* for the honour of God, and the good of man; and enable him to ſurmount the difficulties, which he meets with in proſecuting this glorious deſign. I am next to enquire,

§. 2. To what *height*, to what *degrees* of virtue, the *perfect* man may advance. I have in part anticipated this enquiry already; yet cannot forbear adding here *two* obſervations. *Firſt*, That reaſon and ſcripture ſeem to preſs us on towards an endleſs progreſs in virtue. And yet, *ſecondly*, That both ſeem to propoſe to us ſuch a *ſtate* of *perfection* as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that ſo the *beginner* may not *deſpair* of perfection, nor the *perfect abate* any thing of their vigilance, and their induſtry. Such a degree of excellence, to which nothing can be added; ſuch a height, above which there is no room to ſoar, if apply'd to man and this world, is ſurely but an imaginary notion. To dream of *ſuch a perfection*, were to forget our nature, and our ſtate: no ſagacity of judgment, no ſtrength of reſolution,

lution, no felicity of circumſtances, can ever advance us to *this* height. Such a *perfection* as this, that is incapable of any increaſe, belongs, I believe, to *God* alone: or, if we may allow it to *angels*, we muſt certainly deny it to *man:* in *whom*, one would think, the appetites of the body can never be ſo entirely ſubdued, that there ſhould be no place to extend his conqueſt, or render his victory more intire and compleat: and in *whom*, one would think, the Spirit of God ſhould never reſide in that meaſure, that there ſhould be nothing to be added to his fulneſs. 'Tis hard to conceive, how we ſhould ſtudy the ſyſtem of divine faith, how we ſhould daily reflect upon our lives and actions, without *growing* in ſpiritual wiſdom and underſtanding; 'tis hard to conceive, how we ſhould give God, the world, and our ſelves, repeated proofs of our integrity in the day of tryal, without *increaſing* our ſtrength and aſſurance: and love muſt naturally increaſe with theſe. Whence it is, that St. *Paul*, acknowledging himſelf not yet *perfect*, reſolves, *that forgetting thoſe things that are behind, and reaching forwards to thoſe things that are before, he would preſs on towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Chriſt Jeſus*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. And St. *Auſtin* reſolves, *Pleniſſima charitas, quamdiu hic homo vivit, in nemine*

mine est: An absolute plenitude of charity is in no mortal upon earth.

And yet, if we come to *fact* and *practice*, one would be tempted to think, that the *disciples* of our Lord and Master, had arrived at that state, wherein their business was not to climb higher, but rather to make good the ground they had gained. What could render St. *Paul's* victory over the body more compleat, who assures us, *I am crucified with Christ?* And again, *I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me?* What could render the authority and dominion of *his* mind more absolute, or its graces more consummate and entire? Who could say with truth, *'Tis not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.* What would you have *added* to that faith, and love, which made *him* ready, *not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem*, which made *him long to be dissolved and to be with Christ?* As to *those* words of *his*, Phil. iii. 13. *forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forwards*, &c. *they* relate to his tryals and performances, to his perils and conflicts; not to his attainments: he does not here deny himself to be *perfect*, though that might well enough have become his modesty and humility; but only, that he was not to look upon himself as already at his goal, a conqueror and crowned; there

there being much yet behind to do and ſuffer, notwithſtanding all that he had paſſed through. This is the ſenſe of his οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη τετελείωμαι, which we render, *not as though I were already perfect.* As to St. *Auſtin*, I am wholly of his mind; for he ſpeaks *comparatively*, and does in effect no more than affirm, that no man living is as *perfect* in *this* world, as he will be in *another*, which no man ſure can ever doubt——If we conſult *reaſon*, will it not be apt to tell us, that as every *being* has its *bounds* ſet it, ſo has every *perfection* too? That there is a *ſtature*, as of the *natural*, ſo of the *ſpiritual* man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to *grace*, no more can be infuſed, than our *natures* are capable of? Otherwiſe, like too rich a cordial, it will not ſtrengthen, but fire our natures; or, like too dazling a light, it will not aſſiſt, but oppreſs our faculties. And does not the *parable* of our *Maſter* countenance this, *Matth.* xxv. 2. wherein he tells us, that God gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one, to every man according to his *ability*. By which one would think our Lord inſinuates, that the meaſures of *grace* are uſually diſtributed in *proportion* to the capacities of *nature*; and that *he*, who improved his *two* talents into *four*, arrived at his proper *perfection*, as well

well as *he*, who improved his *five* into *ten*; it being as abſurd to expect, that the *perfection* of every man ſhould be the ſame, as to expect, that all mens *bodies* ſhould be of the ſame height, or their *minds* of the ſame capacity.

Reflecting on all this together, I cannot but be of opinion, that ſome have actually arrived at *that* ſtrength of faith, at *that* ardour of love, that they ſeemed to have been incapable of any conſiderable *acceſſions* in *this* life. But yet, new occaſions may ſtill demand new virtues; which were indeed before contained and included in faith and love; but no otherwiſe, than as fruits and trees are in their ſeeds. And ſome degree of original corruption may ſtill be lurking in the moſt ſanctified nature; and ſome venial defects and imperfections or other, may ſtill leave room for the greateſt of ſaints to extend his conqueſt. Beſides, 'tis hard to determine or fix the bounds of knowledge; and every new degree of light ſeems to make way for more. So that after all, nothing hinders, but that the *path of the perfect man* may, as well with reſpect to his *rigtheouſneſs* as his *fortunes*, be *like the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*; I mean, the dayof a bleſſed eternity.

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The *motives* to *perfection*, the *fruit* of it, the *means* and *methods* of attaining it, laid down in the *first* section, will all serve here: therefore I have nothing to offer of *this* sort; only, if I forgot to pay that deference to the *institutions* of *our church*, which they justly deserve, I do it *now*: and do earnestly perswade my *reader* to a strict observance of them. I do not only think *this* necessary to maintain a *face* of *religion* amongst us, but also highly conducive to true *perfection*. I am fully satisfied, that there is a *peculiar* presence of God in his *publick* ordinances; that the devotion of good men does mutually enflame and enkindle one another; that there is an holy awe and reverence seizes the minds of good men, when they draw near to God in publick worship; and finally, that if the *offices* of our *liturgy* do not affect our *hearts*, 'tis because *they* are very much indispos'd, and very poorly qualified for the true and spiritual worship of God.

CHAP. X.

Of Zeal, *as it conſiſts in* Good Works. *That our own ſecurity demands a Zeal in theſe good works; ſo likewiſe do the* good *of our* neighbour, *and the* glory *of* God, *which are much promoted by good works.*

AND now let not any one think, that I have taken pains to advance the illumination of a ſinner, to knock off his chains and fetters, to raiſe him as far as might be above the corruption of nature, and the defects and infirmities of life; to ſcatter thoſe lazy fogs and miſts which hung upon his ſpirits, and to enrich him with heroic virtues; let no man, I ſay, fancy that I have laboured to do all *this*, that after all, my *perfect man* might *ſit down* like an *Epicurean God*, and enjoy himſelf; might talk finely of ſolitary ſhades and gardens, and ſpend a precious life, fitted for the nobleſt deſigns, in a ſluggiſh retirement. No, no; as *virtue* is the perfection of human life, ſo is *action* the perfection of *virtue*: and *zeal* is that principle of *action*, which I require in a ſaint of God. Accordingly, the ſcriptures deſcribe this great, this happy man, as *full of the Holy Ghoſt, fervent in ſpirit, zealous of good works.* Such a one

one was *Moſes, mighty in word and deed,* as well as *learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians:* ſuch an one was St. *Stephen,* as full of a divine ardour and irreſiſtible fervency of ſpirit, as of an irreſiſtible wiſdom; and ſuch an one was the excellent *Cornelius, a devout man,* one that had transfuſed and derived the fear of God from his own boſom, throughout his family, and relations, and friends too; *one that gave much alms, and prayed to God always.* What need I multiply inſtances? This is that which diſtinguiſhes the *perfect* man from all others; the victories of faith, the labours of charity, the conſtancy and patience of hope, and the ardors of devotion.

Need I here diſtinguiſh a *zeal* of God, from the fierceneſs of faction, the cruelty of ſuperſtition, from the wakeful and indefatigable activity of avarice and ambition, from the unruly heats of pride and paſſion, and from the implacable fury of revenge? It needs not; no fooliſh, no falſe, fantaſtick, earthly, or deviliſh principle can counterfeit a divine *zeal.* 'Tis a perfection that ſhines with ſuch a peculiar luſtre, with ſuch a heavenly majeſty and ſweetneſs, that nothing elſe can imitate it; 'tis always purſuing good, the honour of God, and the happineſs of man: it *contends earneſtly for the faith once*

delivered to the ſaints; but it contends as earneſtly too, to root out wickedneſs, and implant the righteouſneſs of the goſpel in the world. It is not eager for the *articles* of a *ſect* or *party*, and unconcerned for *catholick* ones. When it preſſes for *reformation*, it begins *at home*, and ſets a bright *example* of what it would recommend to others. 'Tis meek and gentle under its *own* affronts, but warm and bold againſt *thoſe* which are offered to *God*. In a word, though love fill its *ſails*, divine wiſdom and prudence give it *ballaſt*; and it has no heat, but what is tempered and refracted by charity and humility.

Need I, in the *next* place, fix or ſtate the various *degrees* of *zeal*? Alas! it is not requiſite; *zeal* being nothing elſe but an ardent thirſt of promoting the divine glory by the *beſt works*. 'Tis plain, the more excellent the *work*, and the more it coſt, the more perfect, the more exalted the *zeal* that performs it. When, like *Mary*, we quit the cumber and diſtraction of this world, and chuſe religion for our portion, then do we love it in good earneſt. When with the *diſciples* we can ſay, *Lord, we have forſaken all and followed thee*, or are ready to do ſo; when we are continually bleſſing and praiſing God; when, if the neceſſities of Chriſt's church require it, we are ready to call *nothing our own*;

own; when we are prepared, if the will of God be ſo, to *reſiſt even unto blood*; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but God and holineſs; *then* have we reached the *height* of *zeal*. In a word, *zeal* is nothing elſe but the *love of God* made *perfect* in us. And if we would ſee it drawn to the life, we muſt contemplate it in the bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is the perfect pattern of heroic love. How *boundleſs* was *his love*, when the whole *world*, and how *tranſcendent* when a *world of enemies*, was the object of it! how indefatigable was *his zeal!* how wakeful! how meek! how humble! how firm and reſolved! his labours and travels, his ſelf-denial, prayers and tears, his ſilence and patience, his agony and blood, and charitable prayers poured out with it for his perſecutors, inſtruct us fully, what divine *love*, what divine *zeal* is. And now, even at this time, *love* reigns in *him* as *he* reigns in *heaven*: *love* is ſtill the predominant, the darling paſſion of *his* ſoul. Worthy art thou, O Jeſus! to receive honour, and glory, and dominion! worthy art thou to ſit down with thy Father on his throne! worthy art thou to judge the world, becauſe thou haſt *loved*, becauſe thou haſt been *zealous* unto death, becauſe thou haſt *overcome!* ſome there are, indeed, who have *followed* thy bright

example, tho' at a great diſtance. First, martyrs and confeſſors: next, thoſe beloved and admired princes, who have governed their kingdoms in righteouſneſs; to whom the honour of God, and the good of the world, has been far dearer, than pleaſure, than empire, than abſolute power, or that ominous blaze that is now called glory. And next follow,—— Hold! this is the work of angels, they muſt marſhal the field of glory in the end of all things. O my God, may I at leaſt be one, to fill the train of this triumphant proceſſion of that bleſſed day, when thou ſhalt crown the zeal and patience of thy ſaints! Thus have I given a ſhort account of *zeal*. I will now endeavour to kindle it in every breaſt by ſome few conſiderations; which will at once evince the *neceſſity*, and declare the *fruit* of it.

1. Our *own* ſecurity and happineſs demand of us *zeal* fruitful in *good works*.

2. It is indiſpenſable to the welfare and good of our *neighbour*.

3. It miniſters moſt effectually to the *glory of God*.

1. Our *own* ſalvation and happineſs depend upon it. For without *this*, we reject, or at leaſt fruſtrate the *counſels of God, againſt*

againſt our own ſouls; 'twas for this Chriſt died, that *he might purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* This is the great end of our *election*; *God hath choſen us in Chriſt before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love,* Eph. i. 4. which is to be explained by *Eph.* ii. 10. where God is ſaid to have *before ordained that we ſhould walk in good works.* And the beginning of the *verſe* minds us, that 'tis for *this* end God imparts the light of his Word, and the vigour of his Spirit; and for *this* end he ſanctifies and renews our nature; *We are his workmanſhip created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works.* St. *Peter* tells us, that this is that which all the great and precious promiſes of God immediately aim at: firſt godlineſs, then life; firſt virtue, then glory. What ſhall I ſay more? Our *Lord*, in his narrative of the laſt judgment, and elſewhere; and his *apoſtles*, in almoſt innumerable places, have with great power, and great earneſtneſs, inculcated *this* doctrine, that we ſhall *be judged according to our works:* that immortality and glory is the portion, not of knowledge, but patience and charity; not of an orthodox belief and ſpecious pretenſion, but of righteouſneſs and zeal; for the *incorruptible*, the *never-fading crown*, is *a crown of righteouſneſs.* Or, if men will be judged by their

faith, which is not the language of the *goſpel*, this does not alter the matter at all; ſince *faith* it ſelf will be judged by its *works*. And as a happy *eternity* depends upon our *zeal*; ſo nothing elſe can give us any comfortable, any rational aſſurance of it in *this* life. The reaſon is plain; becauſe 'tis *zeal* that is the only unqueſtionable proof of our integrity; and *good works* are the fruit which alone can evidence the life and truth of our *faith* and *love*; *hereby we know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, 1 John ii. 3. *Yea, a man may ſay, thou haſt faith, and I have works: ſhew me thy faith without thy works, and I will ſhew thee my faith by my works*, James ii. 18. Doſt thou believe in *God*? Why art thou not *holy as he is holy*? Doſt thou believe in *Jeſus*? Why doſt thou not *deny thy ſelf, take up thy croſs and follow him*? Why doſt thou not walk as he walked? Doſt thou believe a judgment to come? Why doſt thou not *work out thy ſalvation with fear and trembling*? Why doſt thou not *prepare to meet thy God*? Why art thou not *rich in good works*, that thou mayeſt *lay up a good foundation againſt the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life*? Nor are *good works* leſs neceſſary to prove our *love*, than *faith*. Certainly, if we love holineſs, if we *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, we ſhall never live in a direct

rect contradiction to the ſtrongeſt paſſions of our ſoul; we ſhall never refuſe to gratify an inclination, which is not only fervent in us, but its gratification will procure us eternal rewards too. Certainly, if we *love God*, we cannot but ſeek his glory; we cannot but be deſirous to maintain communion with him. And if ſo, do we know any *ſacrifice* that is more acceptable to *God* than *good works*? Do we know any that he delights in more than *zeal*? Do we *love* the *bleſſed Jeſus*? Are not *good works* the very teſt of this love which himſelf has appointed? *If a man love me, he will keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you*, John xv. 14. *The love of Chriſt*, ſaith the apoſtle, *conſtrains us* what to do, *to live not to our ſelves, but to him that died for us, and roſe again*, 2 Cor. v. 15. What other returns can we make to Jeſus? What other way can we expreſs our gratitude to him? He ſits on the right-hand of God; *all power is given him in heaven and in earth*: he does not himſelf need our miniſtry, nor want our ſervice and charity; but hear what he ſays, *Inaſmuch as you did it to one of theſe my little ones, you have done it to me*, Matt. xxv. 40.

2. Our *zeal* is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the welfare and happineſs of *others*. Do we

we regard our neighbour's eternal intereſt? 'Tis *zeal* repreſſes ſin, and propagates righteouſneſs; 'tis *zeal* defends the faith and ſuppreſſes hereſy and error; 'tis *zeal* converts the unbeliever, and builds up the believer; 'tis *zeal* that awakens the drowſy, quickens the lukewarm, ſtrengthens the weak, and inflames the good with a holy emulation; 'tis *zeal* that baffles all objections, refutes all calumnies, and vanquiſhes all oppoſitions raiſed againſt religion, and oppreſſes its enemies with ſhame and confuſion. 'Tis, in a word, *zeal*, and *zeal* alone, that can make religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the world to it; for this alone can *adorn the goſpel*; for it renders virtue more conſpicuous, more taking in life and example than it can be in the precepts and deſcriptions of words. Nor is *zeal* leſs ſerviceable to the *temporal*, than *eternal* intereſt of mankind. When God laid the foundations of the *world*, he laid the foundation of *virtue* too; and when he formed *man*, he wove the neceſſity of *good works* into his very *nature*. How neceſſary is *juſtice* to poor creatures who lie ſo open to wrongs and injuries? How indiſpenſable is *charity*, or *generoſity*, to theſe, who are expoſed to ſo many accidents, to ſo many wants, to ſuch a viciſſitude of fortune? And being all ſubject to ſo many follies and infirmities, to

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ſo many miſtakes and fancies, how ſtrong muſt be our obligation to mutual *forbearance*, *patience*, and *gentleneſs?* In a word, *ſin* and *miſery* abounds in the world; and if there were not virtues and good works to ballance the *one*, and to relieve and ſupport us under the *other*, life would be intolerable. So that revealed and natural religion do neceſſarily terminate and center in a *zeal* for good works, as their ultimate end, and utmoſt perfection in this life; and the rule of our Saviour, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo unto them*, is an abſtract, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the code of nature too; and this ſingle principle, if ſincerely purſued, will ferment and work us up to the nobleſt heights of *zeal*. I might here, if it were neceſſary, eaſily ſhew that *zeal* has as happy an influence on the *publick* as the *private*; that *this* muſt animate that juſtice and mercy that ſupports the throne; that is the ſoul of that honour, integrity, generoſity, and religion, which ſupport the ſtates and kingdoms of the world; and without which all politick ſyſtems muſt needs tend to a diſſolution. But I have ſaid enough; and from what I have ſaid, the truth of my *third* conſideration naturally appears,

3. *Viz.*

3. *Viz.* That *zeal* miniſters moſt effectually to the glory of God. For if *zeal* be in it ſelf thus lovely, thus neceſſary; if the fruits and effects of it be thus ſerviceable to the temporal and eternal intereſt of man; what a lovely, what an agreeable notion of God ſhall we form from this one conſideration of him, that he is the great Author of it? That he is the Origin and Fountain of that light and heat, of that ſtrength and power of which it is compounded and conſtituted? He commands and exacts it; he excites and encourages to it by the promiſe of an eternal crown, and the raviſhing fruition of himſelf: he has planted the ſeeds of it in our nature, and he cheriſhes them by the bleſſed and vigorous influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the divine *Nature!* how gracious is the divine *Government!* when the ſubſtance of his laws is, that we ſhould love as brethren, that we ſhould cloath the naked, feed the hungry, deliver the captive, inſtruct the fooliſh, comfort the afflicted, forgive one another, if need be, ſeven times a day; and ſuch like. If to do all this be an argument of being *regenerate*, and *born of God*; if this be a proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated to us, and his Image ſtamped upon us, how amiable muſt *God* be, when

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we discern so much benefit, and so much pleasure, and so much beauty, and so much loveliness in those qualities which are but faint and imperfect resemblances of him! in a word, the *holiness* of *his* children and servants, is a demonstration of the *holiness* of *God* himself; and in this consists the very lustre of divine glory. Holiness is the flower of all his attributes; the most *perfect*, because the most *comprehensive* of all his divine perfections; for *holiness* includes *wisdom*, *power*, and *goodness*. As to *goodness*, the case is so plain, that *holiness* and *goodness* are commonly used as terms equivalent. As to *wisdom*, 'tis evident, that no action is commendable and lovely, whatever the matter of it be, unless the principle, the motive of it be *wise* and *rational*; therefore *wisdom* cannot be separated from the notion of *holiness*. Lastly, As to *power*, this must needs be comprised in it too; for *beneficence*, which is at least one great branch of *holiness*, must unavoidably imply *power* in the *benefactor*, and *impotence* and *want* in the *beneficiary*. And this is the notion wherein *holiness*, when ascribed to God in scripture, is generally taken. *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of thy glory*, does express the greatness and majesty, as well as the rectitude and purity of the divine Nature; and to *sanctify the Lord God in*

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our hearts, is, in the language of the ſcripture, not only to love him for his goodneſs, but revere and fear him for his majeſty and greatneſs. Need I here add, that the excellencies of the *creature*, their fitneſs and ſubſerviency to the great ends of their creation, is the glory of the *Creator*; juſt as the beauty, ſtrength, and convenience of the *work*, is the honour of the *architect?* If the ſun, moon, and ſtars, the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation, ſhew forth the glory of God; how much more do ſpiritual and rational beings? And *virtue* is the perfection of *reaſon*, and *zeal* of *virtue*; for this is that which does directly and immediately advance thoſe great ends that are deareſt to God, as I have, I think, abundantly made out.

CHAP. XI.

Of Humility. *How neceſſary it is to* Perfection.

OUR Saviour has ſo often pronounced the *humbleſt*, the *greateſt* in the kingdom of heaven; he has ſo often promiſed the *firſt* place and the *greateſt* exaltation to the *loweſt* condeſcenſions: he was himſelf ſo illuſtrious an example of *lowli-*

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neſs of heart, of *poverty of ſpirit*; and the apoſtle has ſo expreſly aſſerted his *joy and crown*, to be the reward of his *humility*, *Phil.* ii. that I can never think, that man can ever riſe to a more eminent height, than *that* to which the imitation of this virtue of Chriſt will advance him. The more *perfect* therefore man is, the more *humble* muſt he be too: the clearer view, and the more aſſured hope he has of heaven, the more unconcerned muſt he be for all thoſe things which the world pays a reſpect and honour to, the more he muſt be above them: the more fervent his love of God and his neighbour grows, the more confidently muſt he place all his glory in this one thing, the conformity of his affections and life to that of the bleſſed Jeſus. Then is he *perfect*, and *the ſame mind is in him that was in Chriſt Jeſus.* Finally, The more he *knows* God, the nearer he is admitted into *communion* with him; the more plainly will he diſcern at how infinite diſtance he ſtands from the divine Majeſty and Purity, and will proſtrate himſelf even into *duſt and aſhes* before him. The *perfect* man admires, adores, obeys, loves, relies, truſts, and reſigns up himſelf, and all that is dear to him, to God. He is nothing in his own eyes; he pretends to nothing, he lays claim to nothing, or any other title than

that

that of the goodneſs and bounty of God: whatever virtues he has, he aſcribes them to the grace of God; and the glory and immortality he expects, he expects only as the *gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* And whatever he be in *himſelf*, he compares not himſelf with *others*, but he proves his *own work*, that *he* may *have rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another.* Nothing but *zeal* for God, or *charity* for man, can put him upon the aſſerting his own merit or ſervice; but when he glories, it is like St. *Paul*, in his *infirmities*, that *the power of Chriſt may reſt upon him.*

Need I here inſiſt on the *fruit* of humility? Surely 'tis conſpicuous to every one that thinks at all. Great is the peace and reſt of the *humble* ſoul *here*; and great will be his glory *hereafter.* He, who loves not the world nor the things of it, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life*, enjoys a perpetual calm and ſerenity of mind. There is no object that can raiſe any ſtorm in him; there is nothing that can breed in him uneaſy deſires and fears. He, that loves the *Father*, is fixed on an immutable and perfect good; and he that *now* quits all for God, ſhall *one day* participate of the fulneſs of God, and that for ever.

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Need I invite and exhort man to *humility*? Need I guard him againſt ſpiritual *pride*? One would think 'twere altogether uſeleſs to attempt it. Is it poſſible, that the *creature* ſhould think himſelf ſo independent of his *Creator*, that he ſhould be able to pay him more ſervice than were due to him? Is it poſſible, that man ſhould ſet ſuch a rate upon his own righteouſneſs, as to think it capable of deſerving the utmoſt rewards that an infinite God can beſtow upon him? Is it poſſible, in a word, that *man*, poor, frail, ſinful *man*; *man*, that can do nothing that is good, but by the aſſiſtance of divine grace; *man*, depraved and corrupted in his *nature*, and but a very ill husband of *grace*; is it poſſible, I ſay, that *man* ſhould be *proud* towards *God*, towards that glorious and incomprehenſible Being, who is the Creator and Lord, the Monarch and Patron, the God and Father of heaven and earth? But as abſurd as this is, univerſal experience teaches us, that *humility*, true *humility* is a hard leſſon; and that very excellent perſons are not out of the danger of falling into vicious elations of mind. In order therefore to promote the one, and ſecure us againſt the other, I will propoſe theſe two or three conſiderations.

1. There never was mere man yet, that did not fall ſhort of his duty.

2. *Man* is the creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has received all from him; and therefore let him do the utmoſt he can, he does no more than his *duty*.

3. God ſtands in no need of our ſervice; and 'tis our *own*, not *his* intereſt we promote by it.

1. There never was mere man yet, *&c.* For proof of this, I will not fly to original corruption, or ſins of infirmity. Alas! I need not. The apoſtle, *Rom.* i. and ii. and iii. *ch.* lays the foundation of juſtification by faith, in the univerſal defection and depravation of mankind. *They are altogether gone out of the way, there is none that doth good, no not one.* And what *ſins* he there charges the world with, the *catalogue* he gives us of them will inform us. But are *we* no better than *they?* I anſwer, the light of the goſpel, and the preventing grace of God has undoubtedly given a great check to the progreſs of ſin in the world: but ſince no *man* can be juſtified, but through faith in the blood of Jeſus, 'tis plain that *we* too muſt be concluded under ſin. And tho' *our* ſins may not in the number or ſcandal equal *theirs*; yet we

we ought to remember too, that every ſin is the more provoking, the more voluntary it is; and the greater the grace is which it reſiſts and deſpiſes. But what need I compare our ſelves with the *Jew* or *Gentile?* What need I prove by argument and authority, that no man ever yet lived, or will live, without ſin? I mean mortal ſin. Who ever yet looked back diligently into his paſt life, and did not meet with ſtains and deformities enough? When I conſider what legions of ſins are ranged under thoſe two banners of the devil, the filthineſs of the *fleſh*, and of the *ſpirit*; when I call to mind envy, diſcontent, murmuring, diſtruſt, pride, covetouſneſs, ambition, wilfulneſs, contention, frowardneſs, paſſion, diſſimulation, falſhood, flattery, and a thouſand other ſins; and when I reflect upon the weakneſſes and propenſions of nature, and the almoſt innumerable temptations to which we are expoſed, I muſt confeſs I am not at all ſurpriſed to think, that no fleſh can be juſtified in the ſight of God by a covenant of works: and when ever I find any upon a death-bed, as I do ſome, acquitting themſelves from the guilt of any deliberate wickedneſs, I rather admire their ignorance and partiality, than their innocence. And yet, after all, a good man is not to examine himſelf only concerning

the evil that he has done, but alſo concerning the good which he has omitted. He muſt inquire, how far he has fallen ſhort of that poverty of ſpirit, and purity of heart, which he ought to have come up to: and how far he has been wanting in thoſe duties which a thorough zeal would have puſhed him on to. And when he has done this, let him be proud if he can.

2. *Man* is the creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has received all from him. And therefore let him do the utmoſt he can, he does no more than his duty: and, ſtrictly ſpeaking, cannot merit of *him*. He that will pretend to *merit*, muſt be his own maſter; he muſt have a right over his own actions; he muſt be free to diſpoſe of his affections and ſervices as he pleaſes. For, if he be antecedently bound, if he hath no liberty, no freedom, no right to diſpoſe of himſelf, or any thing he is poſſeſſed of, 'tis plain ſuch an one cannot *merit*. And this is the direct caſe between *God* and *man*. God is the great Lord, the great Proprietor of heaven and earth. He that gives alms, does but reſtore a part of what God lent him: he that takes patiently the loſs of goods, or health, or friends, does but give back what he had no right to retain: he was but tenant at will, and had no right to any thing longer than God thought fit to

to continue it. And in all other inſtances of duty the caſe will ſtill be plainer. If he adore and worſhip God, there is infinite reaſon that he ſhould; for he depends upon him for his being and preſervation. If he love God never ſo much, God has deſerved much more than he can pay him: not only the enjoyments of life, but even life it ſelf, being derived from him. From this argument it will follow, that it is impoſſible for a *creature* to *merit* of its *Creator: angels* themſelves never could. For might it not be ſaid with as much truth concerning them, as concerning man, *Who made thee to differ? Or what haſt thou which thou didſt not receive? And if thou haſt received it, why doſt thou boaſt as if thou hadſt not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. And the ſame may be concluded concerning *Adam* in *Paradiſe*. For I demand, had he kept the covenant of God, had he done this by divine *grace*, or by his *own* ſtrength? If by the *grace* of God, as divines generally hold, then may we apply the expreſſion of St. *Auſtin* to *Adam*, as well as to any one now under the diſpenſation of the *goſpel*: that *when God rewards the works of man, he does only crown in him his own gifts.* But ſuppoſe he had done this by his *own* natural ſtrength: were not the endowments of *nature*, as much the gifts of *God*, as

the endowments of *grace?* The one were *natural*, the other *ſupernatural* gifts: both *gifts* ſtill, tho' of a different kind. If it be here *objected*, if this be ſo, how comes St. *Paul* to affirm, *To him that worketh is the reward due, not of grace but of debt?* Rom. iv. 4. I *anſwer*, *firſt*, God ſeems, when he enters into covenant with man, to ſuſpend, or lay aſide the natural right which he has over him as his creature; and to tranſact with him, as free, and maſter of himſelf: but this is all infinite condeſcenſion. *Secondly*, It ſeems unſuitable to the infinite goodneſs of God, to bereave man of the life and happineſs he has once conferred upon him, unleſs he forfeits it by ſome demerit: *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance*; nor can I think how *death*, which has ſo much evil in it, could have entered the world, if *ſin* had not entered it firſt. In this ſenſe, *unſinning* obedience gives a kind of *right* to the *continuance* of thoſe good things, which are at *firſt* the mere effects of divine grace and bounty. *Laſtly*, A covenant of works being once eſtabliſhed, 'tis plain, that as ſin *forfeits* life, ſo obedience muſt give a *right* to it: and as the penitent could not be reſtored, but by an act of grace, ſo he that commits no ſin, would need no pardon. But then life it ſelf, and an ability to work righteouſneſs,

teouſneſs, muſt be owing to grace antecedent to the *covenant:* and ſo ſuch an one would have whereof to *boaſt* comparatively, with reſpect to *others* who fell; but not before *God.* The ſum of all is, *man* has nothing to render to *God,* but what he has received from him; and therefore can offer him nothing but *his own:* which is no very good foundation for merit. But ſuppoſe him abſolute maſter of himſelf; ſuppoſe him holding all things independent of God. Can the ſervice of a few days merit immortality and glory, angelical perfection, and a crown? He muſt be made up of vanity and preſumption, that dares affirm *this.*

3. God ſtands in no need of our ſervice; and 'tis our *own,* not *his* intereſt we promote by it. The foundation of merit amongſt *men* is *impotence* and *want:* the prince wants the ſervice and tribute of the ſubject; the ſubject the protection of the prince: the rich needs the miniſtry and the labour of the poor; the poor ſupport and maintenance from the rich. And it is thus in imaginary, as well as real wants. The luxury and pleaſure of one, muſt be provided for and ſupported by the care and vigilance of others: and the pomp and the pride of one part of the world cannot ſub-

ſiſt, but on the ſervitude of the other. In theſe caſes therefore, mutual *wants* create mutual rights, and mutual merit. But this is not the caſe between *God* and *man*. *God* is not ſubject to any wants or neceſſities: nor is his glory or happineſs capable of diminution or increaſe. *He* is a Monarch, that needs no tribute to ſupport his grandeur, nor any ſtrength or power beſides his own, to guard his throne. If *we* revolt, or rebel, we cannot injure *him*: if *we* be loyal and obedient, we cannot profit *him*. He has all Fulneſs, all Perfection in himſelf: he is an almighty and all-ſufficient God. But on the quite contrary, tho' God have no *wants*, *we* have many: and tho' *his* Majeſty and felicity be ſubject to no viciſſitude, *we* are ſubject to many. Our ſervice to *God* therefore is our *own* intereſt; and our obedience is deſigned to procure our *own* advantage: we need, we daily need his ſupport and protection; we depend intirely on his favour and patronage: *In him we live, and move, and have our being*: and from *him*, as from an inexhauſtible fountain, we derive all the ſtreams of good, by which we are refreſhed and improved. To know, and love him, is our wiſdom; to depend upon him, our happineſs and ſecurity; to ſerve and worſhip him, our perfection and liberty; to enjoy

him

him will be our heaven; and thoſe glimpſes of his Preſence, which we are vouchſafed through the Spirit in this life, are the pledges and foretaſte of it. This is the conſtant voice of ſcripture. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,* Jam. i. 17. *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulneſs thereof. Will I eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy vows unto the moſt high: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me,* Pſal. l. 12, 13, &c. *If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou unto him? Thy wickedneſs may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man,* Job xxxv. 7, 8.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Of the Impediments *of* Perfection. *Five Impediments reckoned up, and inſiſted on. 1. Too looſe a notion of religion. 2. An opinion that Perfection is not attainable. 3. That religion is an enemy to pleaſure. 4. The love of the world. 5. The infirmity of the fleſh. The whole concluded with a prayer.*

THO' I have been all along carrying on the *deſign* of this *ſection*, that is, the removing the obſtacles of *Perfection*; yet I eaſily foreſaw there might be *ſome* which would not be reduced within the compaſs of the foregoing *heads*: for *theſe* therefore I reſerved this place; theſe are *five*.

§. 1. Some ſeem to have entertained ſuch a *notion* of *religion*, as if moderation here, were as neceſſary as any where elſe. They look upon *zeal* as an *exceſs* of righteouſneſs; and can be well enough content to want degrees of glory, if they can but ſave their ſouls. To which end they can ſee no neceſſity of *Perfection*. Now I would beſeech ſuch ſeriouſly to lay to heart, that ſalvation and damnation are things of no *common* importance: and there-

therefore it highly concerns them not to be miſtaken in the *notion* they form to themſelves of *religion*. For the nature of things will not be altered by their fancies; nor will God be mocked or impoſed on. If we will deal ſincerely with our ſelves, as in this caſe it certainly behoves us to do, we muſt frame our *idea* of *religion*, not from the opinions, the manners, or the faſhions of the *world*; but from the *ſcriptures*. And we muſt not interpret *theſe* by our own inclinations; but we muſt judge of the duties they preſcribe, by thoſe deſcriptions of them, by thoſe properties and effects, which we find there. We muſt weigh the *deſign* and *end* of religion; which is to promote the glory of God, and the good of man, and to raiſe us above the world, and the body: and ſee how our platform, or model of religion, *ſuits* with it. And if, after we have done this, we are not fully ſatisfied in the true bounds and limits which part vice and virtue, it cannot but be ſafeſt for us to err on the right-hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated exhortations in ſcripture to diligence, and that the moſt earneſt and indefatigable ones, to vigilance, to *fear and trembling*, to patience, to ſtedfaſtneſs, and ſuch like, are utterly inconſiſtent with an eaſy, lazy, gentile religion. That the *life* of *Jeſus* is the faireſt and fulleſt

leſt comment on his *doctrine*: and, that we never are to follow the examples of a corrupt world, but of the beſt men, and the beſt ages. This, this one thing alone, will convince us, *what* endeavours, *what* virtues are neceſſary to gain an incorruptible crown. See with what eagerneſs the *diſciples* of *Jeſus preſſed towards the mark!* ſee with what courage, nay joy too, they *took up their croſs and followed him!* how generous were their *alms!* ſo that the *riches of their liberality* were conſpicuous in the very *depth of their poverty.* What plainneſs and ſingleneſs of heart; what grace and warmth, what peace and joy ſhewed it ſelf in their converſation! what modeſty, what humility in their garb, deportment, and the whole train of life! how frequent, how fervent, and how long too, were their prayers and retirements! In one word! the ſpirit and genius of a diſciple of Chriſt diſcovered it ſelf in all they ſaid and did: and the virtues of their *lives* did as evidently diſtinguiſh a *Chriſtian* from a *Jew* or *Pagan*, as their *faith.* How lovely was religion *then!* how full its joy, how ſtrong its confidence! *then* did Chriſtians truly overcome the world: *then* did they live above the body; *then* was the Croſs of Chriſt more delightful, than the eaſe or honour, the pride or pleaſure, of a ſinful life: *then* did they truly,

ly, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteouſneſs by faith. Let us now compare *our* lives with *theirs*, and then ſit down content with poor and beggarly attainments if we can. Let us put *our* virtues in the ſcales againſt *theirs*; and, if we have any modeſty, the inequality will put us out of countenance: we ſhall bluſh at our vanity; and ſhall not have the confidence to expect the ſame crown, the ſame kingdom with them. But as too lax a notion of religion is apt to beget too much indifference and unconcernment; ſo will it be ſaid, too exalted an one is apt to beget *deſpair:* which is a *ſecond* and no *leſs obſtacle* of *Perfection.*

§. 2. Many there are, who, forming their judgment upon the ſlips and defects of good men, and the corruption of human nature, conceive *Perfection* to be a mere imaginary notion. They believe indeed, that, conſidering how apt man is to fall ſhort of his duty, 'tis very fit that the rule preſcribed him ſhould be exact; and that he ſhould be frequently preſſed, and exhorted to *Perfection:* but that the thing it *ſelf* is too difficult for mortal man to attain in this life. But to this *objection* I muſt oppoſe *theſe* few things, which I believe will be ſufficient to remove it.

1. The

1. The *beginning* of virtue is the moſt difficult part of it: the nearer we approach to *Perfection*, the eaſier, as well as pleaſanter, is religion. And therefore, whoever ſtartles at the difficulties, which lie in the way to an exalted virtue, has as much reaſon to be ſtartled at thoſe which will encounter him in his firſt entrance upon religion: and yet *theſe* muſt be conquered. 2. The avoiding the difficulties of religion, does but plunge us into worſe. We are neceſſarily under this *Dilemma*: if we will attain the peace and tranquillity of the *mind*, we muſt mortify and reduce the appetites of the *body*: if, on the other hand, we propoſe to gratify the appetites of the *body*, and enjoy the pleaſure of *ſin*, we cannot do ſo without offering much violence to the *mind*. And if this be ſo; if ſuch be the war and oppoſition between the ſoul and the body, that there is no way to a true and well-ſettled peace and pleaſure, but by the reduction and mortification of the one or the other; *then* it will be eaſy to reſolve what we are to do. For thoſe appeals which atheiſts themſelves make to reaſon, proclaim the *ſoul* of man to be the ruling and nobler part of him. Beſides, the *ſoul* is the more vital, the more tender and ſenſible part of us: and conſequently the affliction of *this* muſt render us far more miſerable, than any hardſhips

or

or difficulties virtues can impoſe upon the *body*. 3. Whatever be the difficulties of *virtue*, they will ſoon vaniſh, if we often call to mind, that peace and joy are the *fruit* of *virtue*; but ſhame and remorſe, of *ſin*: that no man ever yet repented of his reſiſting and conquering his luſts; but no man ever yet did not repent of following them; unleſs he *died* as much a brute as he *lived*: that heaven is a cheap purchaſe, whatever it coſts us; but the pleaſure of ſin a very dear one, how eaſily ſoever we come by it: and finally, that we are not our own maſters: there is a God to whom we ſtand accountable for our actions: and conſequently, whether we will, or will not, we muſt either undergo the hardſhip and diſcipline of virtue, or the eternal plagues and puniſhments of ſin. Laſtly, The truth is, this opinion of the *impoſſibility* of *Perfection*, has both been begot and cheriſhed by thoſe wild *ſchemes* of it, which have been drawn by the hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiſcreet zeal. But I have here recommended to the world, no fantaſtick, or enthuſiaſtick *Perfection*. I have advanced no heights of virtue, but what many do, I hope, at this day actually feel and experiment in themſelves: none, I am ſure, but what the *followers* of the bleſſed *Jeſus* actually attained and practiſed.

ſed. *Be ye followers of us*, ſaid the apoſtle, *as we are of Chriſt.* *Their* lives were as bright a rule as their doctrine: and by their own actions they demonſtrated the power of the faith they taught. They did not, like the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, *bind heavy burdens upon others, and not move them with their finger*; they did not, like *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, magnify temperance and modeſty at the tabernacles and carnavals of princes; nor commend the pleaſure of wiſdom in the gardens of *Epicurus:* but they *lived* as they *taught*, unſpotted by the pleaſures, unbroken by the troubles of the world; modeſt, ſerene, equal, and heavenly minded, in honour or diſhonour, want or abundance, liberty or priſon, life or death. Let us then no longer *object* or *diſpute*, but with faith and patience be followers of thoſe who have inherited the promiſes: being *incompaſſed with a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us*; *and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God. For conſider him that endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf; leſt ye be wearied and faint in your mind,* Heb. xii.

xii. 1, 2. I have done with thoſe, who endeavour to *ſoften* or *ſhun* the difficulties of religion, not to *conquer* them.

§. 3. There are *others*, who will look upon this ſetting up the doctrine of *Perfection*, as a deſign againſt the *pleaſures* of mankind. What, ſays ſuch a one, ſhall I let go my preſent *pleaſures* out of my hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit *pleaſures* that are every-where obvious, for ſuch as have no being, it may be, but in ſpeculation? or at leaſt, are never to be enjoyed by any, but ſome few rare and happy creatures, the favourites of God and nature? *Pleaſures*, that have matter and ſubſtance in them, for ſuch as I can no more graſp and reliſh than I can dreams and viſions? But to this I anſwer, This pretty talk is all but ſtupid ignorance and groſs miſtakes. For, 1. As to innocent and virtuous *pleaſure*, no man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive man of *this*; but to refine and purify it. And he, that prefers either ſilly, or vicious *pleaſure* before religion, is wretchedly miſtaken. For, 2. *Perfect* religion is full of *pleaſure*. Had we but once arrived at true purity of heart, what could be ſo full of *pleaſure* as the buſineſs of religion? What can be more delightful, than bleſſing and praiſing God, to a grateful ſoul;

Allelujahs, to a ſoul ſnatched from the brink of deſtruction, into the boſom of its Maſter? What can be more tranſporting than the melting tenderneſſes of a holy contrition, made up, like *Mary Magdalen*'s, of tears and kiſſes, ſorrow and love, humility and glory, confuſion and confidence, ſhame and joy? What can be more tranſporting than love, the love of a Chriſtian, when he is all *love*, *as God is Love*; when he *deſires nothing in heaven nor on earth, but God*; when *all things are dung and droſs to him, in compariſon of Jeſus?* 4. If the *pleaſures* of the *world* be more tranſporting than thoſe of *religion*, 'tis becauſe our faith is weak, our love imperfect, and our life unſteady. A conſtant and exalted *pleaſure* is, I grant it, the fruit of *Perfection* alone. The *peace and joy* of the Holy Ghoſt reigns no-where, but where that *zeal and love*, which is an effect of the fulneſs of the Spirit, reigns too. I had once propoſed to have inſiſted on the reaſons of this here; but this labour is prevented, for they are very obvious to any one who hath read the *chapter* of *Zeal* with ſeriouſneſs and attention. Laſtly, What is inſinuated in the *objection*, that the *pleaſures* of the *world* are more numerous, or obvious, than thoſe of *religion*, is altogether a falſe and groundleſs fancy. In every place, and in every ſtate, do the pleaſures of virtue wait upon the

the *perfect* man. They depend not, like thoſe of the body, on a thouſand things that are not in our power; but only on God, and our own integrity. But this part of the objection I have, I think, for ever baffled, *ſect.* 1. *chap.* 4. Theſe *obſtacles* of *Perfection* being thus removed, and the mind of man being fully convinced of the happineſs that reſults from a ſtate of *Perfection*, and of his obligation to ſurmount the difficulties which obſtruct his way to it, there ſeems to be nothing now left to diſappoint the ſucceſs of this diſcourſe, but ſomewhat too much fondneſs for the *world*, or ſomewhat too much indulgence to the *body*; which I am *next*, tho' but very *briefly*, to conſider.

§. 4. There is a *love* of the *world*, which tho' it be not, either for the matter, or degree of it, criminal enough to deſtroy our ſincerity, and our hopes of ſalvation; yet is it ſtrong enough to abate our vigour, hinder our *Perfection*, and bereave us of many degrees of pleaſure at preſent, and glory hereafter. The *indications* of this kind of love of the world, are too much concern for the pomp and ſhew of life; too much exactneſs in the modes and cuſtoms of it; too quick a ſenſe of honour and reputation, pre-eminence and praiſe; too much haſte, and too much induſtry to grow

rich, to *add houſe to houſe, land to land, and to load our ſelves with thick and heavy clay*; too brisk a reliſh of the pleaſures of the world; too great a *gaiety* of mind upon the ſucceſſes; too much *dejection* upon the diſaſters and diſappointments of it; too much care, and too much diligence; an incumbring and embroiling one's ſelf too far in worldly affairs; too much diverſion, too much eaſe. Theſe, I ſay, are the ſymptoms of a mind tainted with a love of the world, tho' not ſo far as to ſickneſs and death. However, it will be enough to check the vigour, and dilute the reliſh of the mind. Now, the only way to overcome this defect, and to captivate the mind entirely to the love and ſervice of religion and virtue, is to conſider frequently and ſeriouſly the rewards of *Perfection*, the pleaſure that will attend it in another life. Had the *young man* in the *goſpel* done this; had he had as lively a notion, and as true an eſtimate of the riches of *eternity*, as he had of *temporal* ones, he would never have *gone away ſorrowful*, when he was adviſed to have exchanged the treaſures of *earth* for thoſe of *heaven*. Had the ſoul of *Martha* been as much taken up with the thoughts of *eternity*, as that of *Mary*, ſhe would have made the ſame *choice* as *ſhe did*. They who often *think*, how ſoon the faſhion, the pomp and grandeur of this world

paſſes

paſſes away, and how much better their *heavenly* country is than their *earthly*; how much more laſting, and how much more glorious the *New Jeruſalem*, that *city that has foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*, than this city of ours, which may be overthrown in a moment; will neither weep, nor rejoyce, with too much paſſion; neither buy, nor poſſeſs, with too much application of mind. In one word, he that ſo often and devoutly *thinks* of that day, wherein *Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear, and we alſo appear with him in glory*, that he comes to *love* and *long* for it; ſuch an one will have no great taſte of the honours, or the pleaſures, or the intereſts of life; nor will he be ſlothful or remiſs, but *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord*: whatever degrees of affection he had for any thing of that nature, they will all vaniſh; he will have no emulation, but for good works; no ambition, but for *glory*; I mean, *that* which is *eternal*. In the purſuit of *this* will he lay out the ſtrength and vigour of his mind, for *this* he will retrench his profit, for *this* he will deny his pleaſure, for *this* he will be content to be obſcure, mean, and laborious; for if the *world* be once crucified to him, *he* will the more eaſily bear the being crucified to *it*.

§. 5.

§. 5. After all, there is an *Infirmity* in the *fleſh*, againſt which if we do not guard our ſelves, if we do not ſtruggle heartily, we ſhall *miſcarry*. *The ſpirit is willing*, ſaid our Saviour, *but the fleſh is weak*. Without much care, and much watchfulneſs, the vigour of our minds will be relaxed; the exultation of our ſpirits will flag and droop; and we ſhall ſoon loſe the reliſh there is in religion. The more effectual *remedies* againſt this frailty and fickleneſs of our nature, are *two*. *Firſt*, Godly *fear*; and *this*, the purity and preſence of God, the ſtrictneſs and the impartiality of a judgment o come, the loſs of an eternal crown, the terrors of eternal puniſhment, the number and ſtrength of temptations, the deplorable falls of the greateſt ſaints, and the conſcience of our own weakneſs, will not fail to work in us. Let us then, not only *begin*, but alſo *perfect holineſs in the fear of God. Bleſſed is he that feareth always*. *Secondly*, The ſtedfaſtneſs of *hope*; of hope, that waits and longs for the coming of our Lord. *This* will invite us often to take a view of *Canaan*; *this* will fill the mind often with the beauties and the glories of eternity; *this* will often call to our thoughts, the ſecurity, the reſt, the tranſports of another world, the love of God and of Jeſus, incorruptible crowns, the hallelujahs of angels, the ſhouts of victory,

tory, the fruit of the tree of life, the ſtreams that water the paradiſe of God. And every ſuch object will chide us out of our weakneſs and cowardiſe; every ſuch thought will upbraid us out of our lazineſs and negligence; we ſhall hear always ſounding in our ears the words of *Jeſus* to his *diſciples, What! can ye not watch with me one hour, and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever?* Or thoſe to the *Church* of *Laodicea, To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me upon my throne; as I have overcome, and am ſat down with my Father on his throne.*

And now, *Reader*, if you find I have done you any ſervice, if you think your ſelf under any obligation to *me*, the *return* I beg from you is, that you will *firſt* offer praiſe and thanks unto God; and *next*, whenever you are in the vigour of the ſpirit, and the ardors of faith and love before God in prayer, put up theſe, or the like petitions for me, which I now offer up for my ſelf.

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O My God, and my Father, increaſe the knowledge of thy Word, and the grace of thy Spirit in me. Enable me to perfect holineſs in thy fear, and to hold faſt the ſtedfaſtneſs of my hope unto the end. Pardon all the ſins and errors of my life; and accept of my imperfect ſervices through Jeſus Chriſt. And becauſe, tho', after all we can do, we are unprofitable ſervants, thy infinite bounty will yet certainly recompenſe our ſincere endeavours to promote thy glory; let me find my reward from thee; or rather do thou thy ſelf vouchſafe to be my reward. I ſhould have ever thought my ſelf unworthy to have put up this petition to thee, O thou glorious and incomprehenſible Majeſty, had not thine own Goodneſs, thine own Spirit, kindled this ambition in me. Behold! what manner of love is this, that we ſhould be called the ſons of GOD! theſe are the words of thy ſervant St. John: *and now therefore my ſoul can never be at reſt, till I awake at the laſt day after thy likeneſs; I can never be ſatisfied till I behold thy glory: which vouchſafe me, I beſeech thee, by thy mercy and thy faithfulneſs; by the ſufferings and interceſſion of thy dearly beloved Son.*

FINIS.